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BATTLE OF THE SEAWAYS  
LIONESS OF THE SEAS

# PACIFIC PARTNER

by

GEORGE H. JOHNSTON

LONDON  
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## INTRODUCTION

**T**O THE PEOPLE OF THE United States of America there are few of her fighting allies more important than Australia in the bitter struggle against Japan. This book about Australia is written by an Australian to give Americans a clearer picture of the role of this great South Pacific ally in the general pattern of World War II. It is written to tell Americans something of the impact which America has made on the world's youngest national democracy; to tell something of the struggle of Australian men and women toward a total war effort and an austere way of life; to tell the little-understood background of politics and people; to penetrate into the psychology of the Australian fighting man; and to examine his relations, in action and out of it, with the American doughboy.

To-day there are tens of thousands of young Americans whose destinies are being determined within the Australian theatre of war operations. There are the graves of thousands of Americans in Australian soil—the graves of men who paid the supreme sacrifice to safeguard the better way of life that is represented by their own country and by the country in which they fought their last fight. For no two nations in the world are more alike—in character, in temperament, in way of living—than the Pacific democracies of the United States of America and the Commonwealth of Australia.

The first day I ever spent in the United States was, to me, notable for the fact that I felt completely at home. I had none of the feelings of a foreigner in a strange land. I have spoken with thousands of American soldiers, and they have invariably told me that their reactions on their first day in Australia were identical.

It is likely that a book about Australia by an Australian designed for publication in the United States will be suspect. It is logical that the writer should be regarded as biased in favour of printing the good and forgetting the bad. But where an Australian might not be regarded as an impartial observer, the foreigner visiting the country is apt also to err—to err on the side of forming superficial judgments. Moreover, the foreigner, unless he has lived in Australia long enough almost to be regarded as an Australian, cannot find the necessary standards of comparison

so vital in interpreting the character of a nation at war. A man who has not known Australia at peace can have no conception of the astonishing metamorphosis brought about by conflict and the pressure of self-preservation.

Therefore this book, although written by an Australian, is written as impartially as possible. It is written, too, with pride, for the war effort of Australia must stand comparison with that of any nation in the world. It is the story of a nation of 7,000,000 English-speaking people holding a continent almost the size of the United States, although surrounded by neighbours numbering roughly 1,100,000,000—more than half the population of the world. It is the story of the real Australia—the spirit and psychology of its fighting men and women, the workers in its factories, its political leaders and its war leaders; its achievements and its shortcomings, its battle honours which extend from Atlantic to Pacific, from the Arctic to the Antarctic, the way of life for which, at one stage of the war, it had given more lives, proportionate to population, than any other nation fighting under the banners of the United Nations.

This, then, is simply the story of a country—one of the countries of the United Nations in which so many American men are fighting to-day. It is a country that lays claim to brotherhood and partnership in the struggle of freedom against tyranny, not because of its great wealth or vast population or limitless resources, but simply by virtue of its ability to fight and sacrifice in the common cause.

No man loved Australia more than its great national poet, Henry Lawson. He loved it for its great spaces, its drenching sunshine, its hills covered with the flowering gold of the wattle blossom and the flaming red of the wild waratah, for its peace and simplicity. He died in 1892, half a century before that peace was shattered by the ugly cry of men at war. But before he died he wrote a pledge that has become, almost, the hymn of Australia. His final, prophetic verse has a new and real meaning to-day because it crystallizes into five lines the substance of what this book is about:

*But whatever her quarrel, whoever her foes,  
Let them come, let them come when they will;  
Though the struggle be grim, 'tis Australia that knows  
That her children will fight while the waratah grows  
And the wattle blooms out on the hill.*

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## *I. A DOMINION GOES TO WAR*

### I

#### FORTY-FOUR MONTHS AGO

IT'S HARD NOW TO THINK BACK on those days before September 3, 1939. Forty-four months isn't much out of any man's lifetime. At least that's what you think until you realize that in certain circumstances it is possible to live a whole lifetime in very much less than forty-four months. Days of peace seem so unreal now—just as unreal and fantastic and distant as the days of war will seem when we are again at peace. And it takes a stiff mental wrench to go back to the day when war began.

It was early spring in Australia, and Melbourne was a riot of blossoms and flowers and the kids were skipping to school and the warm sun was melting the frost on the lawns. In the newspaper offices all staffs had been standing by throughout the night. We knew that war was coming days before the great blocks of headline type shouted: "GERMANY DECLARES WAR!" Main interest was centred in the German merchant ships trading to Australia. They had hurriedly lifted anchors and steamed out to sea from almost every main port in the country. Australian aircraft, on "training exercises," were shadowing them as they bucked the long swells of the Tasman Sea and rolled their scuppers under in the lashing seas of the Bight. The war, we knew, would be fought far away. Our only operational force of aircraft—a squadron of Sunderland flying boats—had been preparing to leave England for Australia, but had been ordered to stay over there. Our navy, the largest fleet of the British Dominions, had been mobilized. The police and military intelligence network was closing round the suspected aliens of the country. Munitions factories were setting up new machinery for the manufacture of bullets. The machines bore the stamp, "Made in Berlin." At the docks Italian ships were unloading. Not far away smelly Japanese freighters were stuffing their holds with Australian scrap metal. We were worried only by the first partner in the Berlin-Rome-Tokyo Axis. But we weren't very worried. In a country the size of the United States which supported a population half a million fewer in number than the inhabitants of New York we had 38,000 men

under arms! Almost all of them were part-time soldiers—two nights a week and two weeks a year in camp. The artillery units used eighteen-pounders left over from the War of 1914–1918. We didn't have a combat aircraft in the country worth a damn. Politicians who shouted warnings of things to come were prophets shouting in a wilderness of smugness and complacency and apathy. They were irritating aspects of life that were tolerated in the same way as we tolerated a wet week-end or the postponement of a race meeting.

German tanks had rumbled across the Polish border; dive-bombers of the Luftwaffe were designing the pattern of a new World War in a score of Polish towns and villages. Parlour communists were trying to explain why Soviet Russia was playing along with Germany, or were merely shrugging their shoulders helplessly. But all these things were happening 12,000 miles away . . . and the sun was warm and the race tracks were crowded and the girls in the streets were wearing their summer dresses.

A deputation from an industrial suburb was asking a Health Minister for a Government grant of \$1,000 to help in the establishment of a baby health clinic. The Health Minister was raising his eyebrows and saying despairingly, "Of course we would like to help in this very necessary work, but where, my dear ladies, are we to find the money?" We were still thinking in terms of peace. Within a few weeks we were budgeting in terms of hundreds of millions of dollars—dollars for bombers and machine guns and warships and bayonets and shells. . . .

Except for the emotional excitement of finally saying good-bye to the days of Munich and appeasement, it didn't seem to change very much after Prime Minister Robert Gordon Menzies, leader of the Nationalist Government, had announced Australia's declaration of war against Hitler's Germany, a more or less automatic declaration brought about by Britain's decision. Everybody was quite pleased about it. Australia had never known the actual impact of war, and a quarter of a century had been sufficient time for people to forget the horrors of an earlier war. For a week there was simmering excitement, and then, when nothing happened, people began to think again of the spring weather and the race tracks.

New headlines in the newspapers, special editions hitting the streets with the regularity and persistence of summer raindrops, new taxes, a new series of catch-phrases destined to become the political clichés of the next three years—not much else that suggested war. Australia, you see, had no Pearl Harbor. . . .

But the emotional upheaval had done what it always does when

peace gives way to war. The kids strutted in the streets like soldiers with wooden rifles over their shoulders. Baby sisters howled because their brothers ordered them to take the role of Hitler in these miniature Warsaws fought in the streets and fields of a thousand Australian towns. Toy shops reported increased sales of model Tommy-guns and tanks, a sharp decline in toy trains and chemistry sets. Some women with imagination enough to look ahead but without sufficient imagination to realize that it wouldn't come for another two years began to hoard food and clothing and two-thread silk stockings. Thousands of people were ready to swear that German submarines already were operating off the Australian coast, and the Australian destroyer *Stuart* went charging out through Sydney Heads to drop a pattern of reverberating depth charges in a dusk attack on a suspicious object—an attack which undoubtedly gave some inoffensive sperm whale the greatest shock of his orderly aquatic life. The German merchantmen which had fled the ports of Australia were either pushing over distant horizons or taking shelter in the ports of the then-neutral Dutch East Indies. Even at that, they were luckier than the whale!

Some people, of course, were already taking the war seriously. They were the young people. Young people have to take war seriously. They're usually the ones who have to do the fighting. From the farms of the Western Plains, from city factories and fishing villages, from the great cattle ranches of the "Never Never," from suburban shops and quiet homes and musty legal offices they came in thousands to follow the road to the great adventure of war. Only war itself can convince them that it is not an adventure.

Their fathers before them, in 1914-1918, had volunteered to fight and had formed the Australian Imperial Force—an army of untidy, unruly, sloppy-uniformed, swashbuckling civilians in khaki who established a reputation as fighters which made the slouch-hatted "Digger" recognized the world over as one of the world's best shock soldiers. In proportion to the number of men involved, the original Diggers had suffered more casualties and captured more enemy territory and prisoners than any other army fighting in the Allied forces.<sup>1</sup> They had also started more brawls, drunk more beer, sworn more profusely, stolen more rum from the canteens, caused more troubles in camps and garrison towns, spurned more salutes, and objected more strenuously to discipline than any other army fighting with the Allied forces.

<sup>1</sup> Proportion of battle casualties was 68 per cent.

There couldn't be any half-baked opinions about the Digger. You either liked him or you hated him.

The Americans, who fought shoulder to shoulder with the Australians in the fierce and bloody battles of the Western Front, liked the Aussies more than they did any of their other allies. The Yanks and the Diggers used different accents, but they spoke the same language. Behind the lines at Hamel they fought with each other and cursed each other and roistered with each other. But the Aussies liked to know that the Yanks were on their flank when the Boche was sending over smashing artillery barrages in preparation for a break-through. And the Yanks had a more comfortable feeling at zero hour as they crouched behind parapets waiting for the hop-over knowing that Australian bayonets would be with them in the attack.

A new A.I.F. had to be created in the spring of 1939. And there were many among the thousands of volunteers marching to recruiting offices who took off badges that told of service in a war twenty-five years before, tried to act sublimely oblivious of hair that was grey or thin or absent altogether, and glibly lied to recruiting sergeants when asked their ages: "Just turned thirty-five." . . . "Thirty-nine, but I feel like twenty-one." . . . "Just put it down as thirty-one. After all, a man's as young as he feels!"

Australia had again pinned its faith to a volunteer army—men who were "willing to fight anywhere in the world, against any common enemy, for the duration of the war and twelve months after." Most of the tens of thousands who were streaming to the colours were young men, the men who had never known war. This was not to be an army of professional soldiers, but an army—and a navy and air force, too—of clerks, butchers, bakers, candlestick makers, rich men, poor men, farmers, labourers, lawyers, newspaper men, automobile mechanics, insurance salesmen. An army, also, of the youngsters who had ended school-days in the black days of the great economic depression and who had known only the humiliation of years on the dole.

Out of this heterogeneous collection of humanity had to be created the fighting machine that is a modern army. Makeshift camps were set up. The motley crew was issued with shapeless khaki fatigue uniforms. Some of the men looked in horror at the stiff garments as neatly tailored as a potato sack. Someone named them "giggle suits." A new army slang had been born. They are still giggle suits. . . .

For so many tens of thousands of these youngsters the road to adventure was to be a road to horror and fear and filth and swift death. But out there in the early summer of 1939, in the camps

that were stretching among the scented eucalypts, the reality of war was far away. The men lined up, grinning, for their daily meals in a world of Y.M.C.A. tents and bromide, snarling sergeants and endless squad drill, inoculation parades and open-air latrines; and as they held out their messkits a kid from a dairy farm yelled jestingly:

"Who called the cook a bastard?"

The shouted, disgusted reply came from a hundred throats:

"Who called the bastard a cook!"

The standard joke of 1915 had become the standard joke of 1939. It was so natural, so expected, that it seemed as if twenty-five years of peace had been merely the interruption between normal periods of war. And a new A.I.F. was on its way to war.

## 2

### BACKDROP FOR WAR

THE FIRST AMERICAN SOLDIER I met in Australia was a young sergeant of the Air Corps who asked me to recommend to him a good general book on Australia. "This place is so much like America that I want to get hold of a book that'll tell me how it's different. Because there are differences and I can't quite pin them down," he said. I couldn't recommend a good general book on Australia (every Australian writer seems to specialize on some particular subject and any reader who seeks a good general picture of the country needs to purchase a miniature library), so we sat down and I started to tell him some things. As soon as I'd finished with one subject the American would say: "Do you know what the Governor of North Carolina said to the Governor of South Carolina?" And I'd say: "No." And he'd say: "It's a long time between drinks!" And two more glasses of lukewarm beer would be slapped down on our table. . . .

Australia is like the United States of America in most of the things that create what is called the national way of life. This in itself is paradoxical. Australia is almost more British from a racial point of view than Britain itself. Ninety-seven per cent. of the total population is of British stock. Yet Australian people have more affinity with the people of the United States than they have with the British. In fact, they resent being described as "English" or "British." For the last ten years the influence on Australian

development has been predominantly American, and with the more recent impact of war in the Australian theatre, a war in which Yanks and Aussies have again fought side by side, this influence has greatly strengthened and will undoubtedly become one of the most powerful of all the factors in post-war development.

There are so many things that the Americans and the Australians have in common that one wonders why they haven't got closer together long before this. Both are young nations—Australia is the only continent which an American can visit and find a civilization younger than his own; both are the homes of virile people who live an outdoor life, both are more concerned with their own traditions than with the cultural relics of a centuries-old European history, and both were founded on a pioneering tradition. Australia is, in fact, exactly a generation closer to frontier days than America. Each country is tremendous in area, although Australia has fitted into its 2,974,581 square miles 7,068,689 people, less than the population of New York City.

The Australian way of life is probably more democratic even than the American—certainly much more so than the British. There are few of the wide differences, either in climate or class, that are found in the United States. There is less poverty, but there is less wealth, there are few palatial buildings and practically no luxury hotels, but there are no slums in the true sense of the word. There is remarkably little respect for either wealth or position. The job of the plumber is respected as much as that of the lawyer. In any case, the two usually start off life by attending the same Government school. The most detested persons in Australia are the snob and the social climber.

Australia's present Prime Minister, John Curtin, left school at the age of twelve to work as a printer's devil. His predecessors included a small-town accountant, a lawyer, a country school-teacher (who died in office, after six years as Prime Minister, almost without a penny to his name), a small-town storekeeper, a miner, a country doctor and a former hobo! There have been more Australian Cabinet Ministers who have lacked a college education than there have been Ministers entitled to wear some "old school tie."

It is not improbable that the Four Freedoms, of which so much has been said in recent months, have more basic reality in Australia than in any other country. Because of compulsory voting in which every adult, man or woman, has a vote and one vote only; and because of non-political appointment to the

Government Public Service (entrance to which is by competitive examination), political freedom in Australia is fundamental, and with this goes freedom of speech. Strict Commonwealth laws give complete freedom of religion to all denominations and all sects. "Freedom from Fear" is abstract, but at least Australia shares with America almost complete freedom from the terror that has been hanging like a black cloud over the peoples of Europe and Asia for so many years. No country in the world has yet evolved a social system that gives to all people the "Freedom from Want" which is the fourth of the freedoms listed among the declared war aims of the democracies. Nevertheless, there is no such thing in Australia as complete and continued poverty. Trade unionism is basic in all employment, on the principle that every human being willing to perform useful work in the life of a community should be paid sufficiently well to enjoy a reasonable standard of comfort. For this reason "tipping" has always been regarded as an unwanted evil, and was completely non-existent until American troops, fearful of offending, introduced the practice to which they were accustomed. They were mildly astonished in the first days of their stay in Australia to find waitresses handing back the coins left on tables with the remark: "You came over here to help us fight the war."

The gesture of a waitress could be symptomatic of a certain trait in Australian character—usually revealed in an aggressive and sometimes unnecessarily rude independence. To many this characteristic is an expression of the inferiority complex which until recent years has been as marked in Australia's international dealings as in the character of the individual. It was an inferiority complex largely brought about by Australia's unbalanced economy, which let her produce far more wool and food than she could ever hope to use and far too little of the manufactured goods that she needed so constantly. As a result she was dependent upon overseas markets, the most important of which was Great Britain. And Britain did little to encourage Australia to move toward industrial development and a measure of economic self-sufficiency.

The logical development alignment for Australia was with the United States, but any moves toward this end were quietly discouraged by certain British interests as well as by diehard conservatives in the Nationalist Government which guided Australia's destinies in the first twenty-five months of the war. Defence of Australia was regarded largely as a responsibility of the British Navy, supported by the efficient but very small Royal Australian Navy. The Australian war effort was officially regarded as a share in the general policy of Imperial defence,



which in the first two years of war involved, almost exclusively, Australian commitments to theatres of war half a world away.

This general policy of defence was constantly under fire from members of the Labour Opposition, who shrewdly suspected long before war broke out that a second European conflict would pin down the British fighting strength to the defence of the British Isles, the Mediterranean, and the Suez route to India. Australian naval power, said the Labour men, was dependent upon the support of the Royal Navy, and there could never be any certainty about such support. Moreover, naval power without strong home-based aviation would be valueless. "Let us concentrate on the vital importance of air power," said John Curtin, then Leader of the Opposition. His words caused a mild stir in the newspapers of the day and were then forgotten. Not until five years later was the warning heeded. By that time Curtin himself was Prime Minister, Britain was fighting with its back to the wall and could spare little or no assistance to the dominions, and Australia was in dire peril, with the cream of its manhood fighting in the deserts of North Africa. The homeland had been drained of guns and shells and bombs to keep the A.I.F. and other Empire troops supplied. And a score of decisive battles had proved the uselessness of naval power without the support of air power.

Three factors contributed to the sudden change in Australia's foreign and defence policies. One was the rise to power of the Labour Party. The second was the collapse of supposedly "impregnable" Singapore. The third was the tide of Japanese conquest which flooded southward practically to the northern beaches of Australia. Almost overnight Australia became an independent voice in the councils of the United Nations. It put forward its views without first finding out what the British reaction to such views would be. And then it settled down to fight the Battle for Australia, looking always towards the United States for the assistance without which such a fight was doomed to failure.

Long before this the battle for supply had begun in hundreds of large and small factories in Australia. The demands of war were forcing an agricultural continent to become a continent of industry. When war began in September, 1939, there were four war factories in Australia. Together they employed 13,500 men and women, who could scarcely maintain sufficient output to equip Australia's tiny militia army of 38,000. To-day there are 49 major munitions factories, 180 big annexes, and many hundreds of smaller factories, even including garages, turning out

war materials. Factory workers on full-time war production schedules now number 600,000 and they make guns, tanks, aircraft, warships, bombs, shells, and almost everything else that is needed to keep Australian fighting men fighting. They also provide enormous quantities of equipment for their American allies in the South-west and South Pacific zones. It has been a staggering switchover. I remember the earliest days of the war when the home front began to turn its attention to the manufacture of the tools of battle. Australia had never made an automobile. Australia had never made countless other things that were needed so desperately.

Within a few months factories were turning out war materials for Australian forces. Within a year Australia was exporting war supplies to overseas battlefronts. Australian-built naval guns were used aboard British warships fighting the Battle of the Atlantic. Australian bullets were used in Spitfires and Hurricanes fighting the vital Battle for Britain. Australian equipment was carried by Indian troops on duty in Burma and Malaya. In two years Australian war production had multiplied forty-two times, and scores of factories were turning out an increasing amount of materials that British experts had said could never be manufactured in Australia. Within that time the agricultural "land down under" had become the greatest Empire arsenal east of Suez.

Before this industrial metamorphosis could take place tools and jigs were needed. Australia had no industry for the manufacture of machine tools. They were always imported from Europe or Britain or the United States. They were sought overseas in vain. America and Britain had their own problems of tooling-up for mass production. They were unobtainable in Australia. So they had to be made or improvised. Machine tools needed in shipyards were built by Australian engineers from drawings and pictures in illustrated catalogues.

"Machine tools couldn't be bought for love or money, so it was up to us to make 'em," one engineer in greasy dungarees with a smudge on his nose explained to me. "I don't know how we did it. Plenty of sweat and plenty of cussin', I guess! Sometimes we worked for months on one tool, trying this and throwing it out, and trying that until at last we got what we wanted. We used lathes and drillers and presses for jobs they were never intended to do. But they worked. We dug one old lathe out of a scrap heap where it had been rusting for twenty-two years. By making a few alterations we made it do a job that no other machine could do."

He cocked a casual thumb toward the immense workshop with

its roaring clash of industry, the spinning wheels and plunging pistons and slow grinding *crunch* of the presses. His thumb was casual, but there was pride in his expression.

"The bloody thing works!" He laughed. "Some of the gadgets violate every principle of engineering design. But the strange thing is that many of our makeshifts are doing the work better than the original machine tools that couldn't be obtained from overseas!"

That was the beginning of Australia's march toward industrial self-sufficiency. To-day factories that once made harvesters and farm tractors are turning out scout cars and twenty-five-ton tanks. Firms that made cricket bats are making the stocks of rifles. Locomotive workshops are turning out tanks and aeroplane parts. Automobile service stations are making trench mortars. And a firm that once made plough-shares might not be making swords, but it is making bayonets . . . and parts for anti-tank guns, and automatic rifles as well!

Down in the southern heart of the continent, in the sleepy little gulf port of Whyalla, they have a proud boast which goes: "From sheep to ships in twenty months!" When war began it was a little settlement of fewer than 1,500 sheep farmers. To-day its population has increased tenfold and in the huge shipyard which has been established, modern 10,000-ton merchant ships have already been turned out in quantity. The men who made the machinery and built the ships were farmers who had known more about sheep than ships, more about rabbits than rivets. Most of them had come down from parched farms of the drought area, homeless and penniless. Six Scottish engineers taught them to build ships. On reclaimed land that was once a mangrove swamp they built great blast furnaces, they launched their ships and fitted them out, and in huge factory annexes they turned out shell cases and aircraft engine cylinders and parts for the weapons of the men in khaki.

The influx of people overwhelmed the sleepy little town. Now the Government has completed a large housing project; but before that could be done eleven families were living in one small frame house, people were crowded in shacks and tin huts, and one entire family was living at the bottom of a dried-out underground well.

Before the war Australia had never built an automobile. By the time Japan came in Australia was already supplying war equipment to Great Britain, Egypt, South Africa, New Zealand, the Fiji Islands, the Dutch East Indies, Hongkong, Malta, Malaya, Burma, India, and the Fighting French in the Pacific.

*TERRA INCOGNITA*

IT WAS ONLY TWO CENTURIES after the birth of Christ that Ptolemy of Alexandria made his famous map of the known world and on it, far to the southward, sketchily limned the outline of a vast land mass. He named it *Terra Incognita*, the Unknown Land. American troops who landed in Australia could have been excused for feeling that there was still a lot of truth in the ancient geographer's name for the great southern continent. There were very few among them who had even the vaguest notions of Australia's history, although most of them had a sketchy fundamental knowledge that the population of Australia had its roots in bands of wild convicts exported in mass from Britain in the early days of the last century.

Practically none of them realized the quite important fact that it was a happening in American history that proved one of the most significant factors in the establishment of Australia as a white nation in a sea of coloured peoples. For it was not until Britain lost the American colonies after the War of Independence that Australia became a land of potential British settlement. The swift overcrowding of British prisons after the loss of the American colonies created an urgent need for another land to which prisoners could be transported. The great continent that Captain James Cook had explored in 1770 offered a solution to the problem. Sixteen years after Cook's discovery the British home Government approved the organization of a fleet of ships to transfer the first batch of convicts to Botany Bay, near the present site of Sydney. It is advisable to remember that the majority, although not all, of the convicts were political prisoners, debtors of good family, or poor men, women, and children who had been judged guilty of such trivial offences as the stealing of loaves of bread, of poaching from the estates of the landed gentry, of resisting the Navy's "press gangs." There were some wild people among the early convicts, but there were many more who later became good citizens and free men. There are families to-day in Australia who trace with pride a lineage that has some forefather who first saw Australia from the grilled ports of a stinking convict ship.

How Ptolemy knew of the existence of the Australian continent 1,500 years before it was really discovered is a riddle that has

fascinated historians. Perhaps the land was reached by the intrepid Malay sea rovers, who outdid the Vikings in the scope of their voyagings through the rich spice islands of the East. Java, at the beginning of the Christian era, was a great centre for the traders and merchants who sailed from China and India and Arabia to exchange their wares for the rare perfumes and exotic spices of the islands. Undoubtedly, these merchants carried back with them vague stories of this strange, desolate continent, populated by scraggy Stone Age men, a land that was crude and dead and unlovely. Nobody, even then, had seen the green fertility and the rugged beauty of the eastern seaboard.

It was to be many more centuries before anything more was known of the country, and then it was the Portuguese explorer-traders, moving down the chain of the Indonesian spice islands, who brought back the new stories. Between 1524 and 1526 Jorge de Menezes reported the discovery of New Guinea (it was he who called the natives "Papuans," the "frizzy-haired"), and he was followed by avaricious Spaniards who wanted to grab some share of the wealth of the Indies. They explored more of New Guinea, and placed the Solomon Islands on the map, but they failed to reach the Australian continent, although Torres in 1606 sailed right between the Australian mainland and New Guinea. The Spanish navigators lost interest, and the Dutch took their place in adventurous voyages around the northern tip of the continent. They, too, were discouraged and in 1623 Carstensz put an end to further explorations by his dismal picture of Australia.

"This is the most arid and barren region that could be found anywhere on earth; the inhabitants, too, are the most wretched and poorest creatures that I have ever seen!"

That, most certainly, was that, so far as the Dutch were concerned, although a few more Dutchmen, Dirck Hartog, Houtman, and others, touched at points on the western coast . . . and went home again as fast as their ships would take them. It is a curious twist of fate that these old Dutch navigators should have seen so many hundreds of miles of the Australian coastline, yet never once have come to a piece of fertile land. They were led, again and again, to the most barren and inhospitable sections of the continent. Every report told of a cruel, dead land in which life was impossible. And so the enormous desert areas were responsible for postponing the exploitation of Australia by three hundred years.

The English came, comparatively late on the scene, also to the inhospitable west coast, but in the company of roistering buccaniers who arrived in a stolen ship after a career of wild piracy was

one man, William Dampier, who found a strange liking for the "miserabl'st country in the world." By 1699 he had persuaded the British Admiralty to give him a ship in which he could conduct explorations of the Great South Land. His voyage satisfied him that the continent had nothing to offer anybody, and when he sailed away he severed contact with Australia for the next seventy years. The Malays, the Portuguese, the Spaniards, the Dutch, the British had come and gone. All had been given the opportunity of taking Australia; all had spurned the unwanted land. The French had the next option, and came closest to realizing the richness of the prize that waited for some man to stake his claim. On the 1766-1769 voyage of the great French explorer, Bougainville, his ship came in from the eastward toward the unbelievably rich and beautiful coastline of North Queensland. The lookout reported breakers ahead. It was the Great Barrier Reef. Had Bougainville sailed on and found a passage through the reef, Australia to-day might be part of the French Empire. But Bougainville was intimidated by the curl of the sea on the fangs of coral. He altered course to the northward and dodged around New Guinea.

A year later the Yorkshire seaman, Captain James Cook, sailed out of the sunrise to *discover* Australia for Britain. By this time the outline of the continent was fairly accurately marked on maps. It was left to Cook to discover, not Australia, but the economic value of Australia. It was a discovery by scientists, for Cook had taken his ship into the South Seas to observe a partial eclipse of the sun. When he landed at Botany Bay, near Sydney, the scientists in his party marvelled at the wealth of rich plant life, at the fertile soil, at the rolling beauty of the green land that knew no harsh winter, no arid summer.

Before Cook left Australia he hoisted the English flag on an island two miles off the Queensland coast and on August 23, 1770, formally took possession of Australia for Britain. The country was named Australia. *Terra Incognita* had at last found an owner.

Settlement began in 1788, when eleven ships under Captain Arthur Phillip (carrying 800 convicts and 700 soldiers and settlers) arrived at Botany Bay after a voyage of eight months from England. A few days later the site of settlement was transferred to the shores of beautiful Port Jackson, on which Australia's greatest city, Sydney, now stands. For many years the settlement was almost entirely dependent upon supplies of food from Britain, but gradually the settlers learned to grow their own food and graze their own cattle. The whole vast continent was

circumnavigated and charted, but inside the tiny fringe of coastal settlement the continent was still *Terra Incognita*.

In 1813 an exploring party smashed through the great encircling stone ramparts of the Blue Mountains which had hemmed in the little colony. They saw before them rich pastures extending as far as the eye could reach, northward and westward to the horizon. A new era of progress and exploration was opened up, and pastoral development began from that day. Explorers pushed south to the Southern Ocean, north to the rich, rolling plains of the Darling Downs. The wagons of the settlers followed them. Many of the pioneers died at the hands of treacherous natives; many more succumbed to the privations of the bare, waterless plains. By 1836 important settlements had been established at Hobart, Melbourne, Perth, Brisbane, and Adelaide—the other state capitals of to-day. The convict stream was ending, and in its place had come the quickening stream of assisted migrants and colonists and adventurers. Explorers pushed out from the new settlements into the wilderness. Many never came back. It was an American professor, Herbert Gregory, who best described the parallel between the early Australian explorers and the pioneers of the United States:

“As a record of human endeavour, the exploration of Australia during these years constitutes a chapter in history for which the United States had no real parallel. The pioneers who crossed the Alleghenies found fertile country beyond. The trappers and traders of our northern boundaries were in country abundantly supplied with food and water. The men who pushed their way across the great plains had forage and water for their animals and wild game for themselves. The forty-niners who crossed the deserts of Utah and Nevada were encouraged by the knowledge of California beyond. Only the Spanish explorers from Mexico and the pioneer travellers through the deserts of Arizona and southern California can appreciate the suffering and understand the failures of the heroic Australian scouts. However, persistent explorations gradually disclosed to the Australians that their continent, in spite of its arid expanse, had well-watered agricultural lands for many millions of peoples, and that the resources in timber and ores and grazing lands were unusually large.” The pastoralist and the agriculturist and the gold-pro prospector were following the trails blazed by the explorers. The rutted tracks of their creaking bullock wagons were spreading east and west, north and south. Separate colonies were being established, with headquarters at original settlements. By 1859 the present states of Victoria, Queensland, Tasmania, Western Australia, and South

Australia had all become individual colonies, separate from the mother colony of New South Wales. Each had its own governor and its own government. Jealousies were beginning (jealousies reflected to this day in the broken gauges of the Australian railway systems) even as Australia became a flaring name among the older nations of the world.

It began with the journey of an Australian, Edward Hargraves, to the United States. He was one of the tens of thousands who flocked to California at the news of the great discoveries of gold. Hargraves was not immediately lucky. He found no fortune, but he did find a new thought. He was fascinated by the striking resemblance between the gold country of California and the country in New South Wales where he had lived. In 1850 he went home to test his theory that there was gold hidden in Australia, and early in the following year he discovered Australia's first payable goldfield. The news spread rapidly among the colonists. Prospectors found gold in many parts of Victoria and then, in August, news of the incredibly rich discoveries at Ballarat—at that time the richest gold discoveries in the world—spread like wildfire. The world was electrified when great reefs of gold-bearing quartz were discovered also not far away at Bendigo.

Whole fleets of ships, including the fastest clippers in the world, raced from Europe and from America to the crowded port of Melbourne, where at one time over 400 ships lay at anchor, every one of them deserted by crews who had followed the mad pilgrimage toward the goldfields.

Thousands of Americans found their way to Australia and most of them stayed to settle. In the first ten years the population of Australia increased from 405,000 to 1,146,000. Another half million flocked to the new land within the next decade. In the first ten years also the new colonists took over \$528,000,000 worth of gold from the rich soil. In every state gold was being found in staggering quantities, and it was on this economic basis that the settlement of Australia really began.

It is difficult for the American to realize this fundamental of Australian development—that the story of the real Australia virtually begins at about the same period as the American Civil War. All that went before were little more than exploratory gropings.

Settled on a basis of the easy-come, easy-go life of the gold towns, Australia rapidly sobered with the realization that great wealth came only to the few. Stability was restored by the great armies of pioneer men and women who went out to win their fortunes from rich wheat lands and from the great merino flocks



that grazed on the green pastures. By the end of last century Australia had become one of the great agricultural continents of the world. Her wealth was no longer in the quartz reefs of Bendigo and Ballarat (although another gold rush had been started at Kalgoorlie in 1892 when gold was literally broken off the outcropping reefs in solid lumps), but in the rolling farms and busy trading centres of a new nation. Roads and railways were developed. New towns and cities sprang up. At the turn of the century, national government replaced separate state governments in all matters of national interest. Federation brought about for the first time the Commonwealth of Australia.

Australia's history from that point was the history of a young nation pursuing normal ways toward development. It was still largely a farming continent. The literature of the young country was a literature of sheep farms and bushrangers and horses. The art of the country was a rural art. Wars came and went, but they rolled their tumultuous courses on the other side of the world. There was no war in sunny, peaceful Australia. The colonials who wanted to fight, fought half a world away. They streamed to combat the Boers in the South African War. Three hundred and thirty thousand of them volunteered to fight the battles of the Empire in the First World War and they suffered over 226,000 casualties!

The tide of world currents washed along, a bloody tide of famine and war and revolution and persecution. They had little real effect on distant Australia, far removed from the main stream of civilization. National economies trembled and collapsed in the great World Depression. The waves of poverty and ruin and tragedy washed Australia. The dole became a new and dreadful factor in the national way of life. But of all the countries of the world it was Australia which first shouldered its way through the chaos of the depression and set cautious steps again on the road to progress.

Another war came with Australia still marching along that road, still with the confidence and swagger of immaturity, a nation too young even to have created a national literature or a national art. But this time the war came to Australia. The attention of the world was focussed again on the young continent —no longer *Terra Incognita*.

## THE MAN WITH THE TURNED-UP HAT

THE FIRST OF THE ALMOST endless stream of troop trains was pulling out of the great main railway station of Melbourne. From every window peered the grinning faces of soldiers, sun-browned faces topped by the turned-up slouch hats of the Diggers. The new A.I.F., the first trained men of the Sixth A.I.F. Division, which was to take Bardia and fight the bloody campaigns of Greece and Crete and Tobruk, were on the initial stage of their journey to war. Men cheered and shouted and whistled as the train began to move. It gathered pace. And then from the rear of the train three men leaned out, laboriously swinging the great bronze station bell, clanging the brazen tongue almost in the choleric face of the enraged station-master.

The official yelled angrily, and then dashed to his office with a sour but satisfied smile on his face. His instructions to the station-master at Ballarat—ninety-eight miles up the track—were simple but clear: "Stop Number One troop train. Search carriages and recover bell stolen from the Spencer Street Station."

At Ballarat the train pulled up with grinding brakes. The station-master and a police escort moved through the train, walked triumphantly away with the stolen bell on their shoulders. The train moved out slowly. And then from the rear of the train three men leaned out, laboriously swinging the great bronze station bell of Ballarat!

It was to be almost three years before Ballarat saw its bell again. Then the Sixth Division returned, its ranks sadly thinned by battle, its record of achievement studded with such names as Bardia, Tobruk, Benghazi, the plains of Thessaly, Thermopylæ Pass, Crete, Syria. And the "Fighting Sixth" handed back the bell to the station-master at Ballarat, the bell they had carried with them through two tough years of desert and mountain fighting, a bell now inscribed with the story of its wanderings.

That story, true in every detail, is almost a parable of the Digger, the man with the turned-up hat, the man who is a hard-boiled idealist, a practical joker with all the sentiment in the world beneath his rough veneer.

When another Australian infantry division was stationed in England during the blitz, they were invited by the City Corporation to visit Manchester. They were given a wonderful time. At

the end of their stay a huge-muscled sergeant respectfully asked the Mayor of the city to attend a little gathering in the City Hall. The Australians, he explained, would like to make a little presentation as a gesture of thanks to the people of Manchester. The Mayor, touched by the request, attended the function. The sergeant, speaking on behalf of the assembled Australians, made the usual remarks of appreciation and then handed to the Mayor a most magnificent collection of Australian curios and native weapons—a collection almost priceless by ethnological standards. The Mayor, stuttering with emotion, pride and gratitude, mumbled his thanks. The Australians marched out of the hall and filed solemnly to the train that would take them back to camp.

It was not until the next day that the Police Department reported the great burglary of the Manchester Museum, a burglary notable for the fact that the theft was confined to the entire Australian aboriginal art collection!

The Australian soldier is a curious person. Basically he is not very different in character from the American doughboy, but so much ballyhoo has been written about him in this war and the last that he feels that he has a reputation which he must live up to at all costs. In action he is a tiger for fighting. Out of action he is still looking for trouble. He has been described as the world's most undisciplined soldier, but this is largely a pose. Actually, his sense of discipline in battle is as highly developed as his urge to disorderly behaviour in the streets of a town when on leave. He is so much afraid of being regarded as a sentimentalist (which he is) or a "sissy" (which he is not) that he shields his real self behind a wall of tough, swaggering truculence and insolence. To children and women he almost invariably displays the courtesy and consideration which are really more natural to him. He loves to drink beer, but he loves even more to talk about how much he loves to drink beer. He gambles on everything. He loves to play poker and the Australian version of blackjack. The national Army game is two-up—a game involving the flipping of two pennies, with bets made according to a set system regarding the fall of the coins. He will bet his last penny on any damn thing under the sun—who can drink down a quart pot of beer the quickest, which of two snails will reach a given goal first, how many of his company will survive a bayonet attack. When the A.I.F. was fighting in the blistering sun of the Libyan Desert, tens of thousands of dollars were wagered by the troops on the outcome of the Melbourne Cup—Australia's greatest turf event—which was being held 12,000 miles away. In Greece, Australian Diggers could tell you

the current form and the recent track performances of horses engaged in races in Brisbane and Melbourne and Sydney! But the Digger loves racing as much for the horses themselves—for he is an outdoor man—as for the betting that goes with the sport. He is a fanatical sportsman. Most Australians play sport rather than watch it, and wherever they go they take their sport with them. The Australian winter game of football has been played in the blazing sunshine of the Western Desert. Australian race meetings have been held in Haifa and Gaza and Alexandria and Darwin and New Guinea. The Australians introduced cricket to the Malaysians in a steamy jungle clearing not far from Kuala Lumpur.

One of the things that has created the impression that the Australian soldier is without discipline is his apparent lack of respect for his officers. The word "apparent" is used advisedly, because there is no soldier who has more respect for his officers than the Australian, provided the officer has proved that he deserves respect. The average Australian maintains his independent attitude after he has gone into uniform and he is never quite sure that the officers are really necessary. He tolerates them when he is satisfied that they know their job, usually addresses them by their first names, and scarcely ever salutes them. In this war, as in the last, Australians had to make an army from civilians, and all men entered the ranks on almost equal terms. Most officers enlisted as privates and received commissions only when they showed they had the essential qualities of leadership. In the last war privates became colonels in charge of battalions and brigadier-generals in charge of brigades. The same thing is happening in this war. And once again many Australians are refusing commissions because of their belief that the enlisted man sees more of the actual fighting. Most of Australia's senior military leaders are "amateurs in uniform." General Sir Thomas Blamey, commander of all Allied land forces in the South-west Pacific, was by profession Chief Commissioner of Police, and before that was a schoolteacher. Lieutenant-General Sir Ivan Mackay, who was knighted in the field after the first successful Libyan Desert campaign, in civilian life is headmaster of a famous Australian boys' school. Lieutenant-General Sir Leslie Morshead, knighted for his magnificent work in the Siege of Tobruk, is the manager of an Australian shipping office. Major-General Gordon Bennett, commander of Australian troops in Malaya, is professionally an actuary. The picture is the same from the top general to the greenest private.

One of the commonest sights in the Australian Army is to see

a wealthy ranch-owner digging trenches as a private alongside another private who before the war was his hired man. Brilliant scientists and labourers have fought and died side by side. In an infantry company with which I covered one fighting campaign there was a wealthy Melbourne stockbroker fighting as a private under the command of a captain who had been a clerk in the stockbroker's office. Promotion is always on merit, never on social or political pull.

Australian "indiscipline" is also largely brought about by the very fact that the Australian can never become a regular soldier at heart. In the front line he will fight as hard as anybody, but off duty he reverts to type—he is a civilian "on the loose" and he wants a good time. He has exactly the attitude of the gold-miner of '49 who slaved for months at a stretch and came into town to pour away all his earnings on one glorious binge.

In a special article in 1942 the *Christian Science Monitor* reached these conclusions about the man with the turned-up hat:

"The Australian will perform fabulous feats in clearing off mallee scrub, or shearing his 200 or 300 sheep a day, or in cutting endless cords of kauri wood in the west. But when the job is done, he will subside into a limp inert condition, stretched out in the dry, Australian sun, with an eye trained on somewhere beyond the stratosphere as if he had never known work in his life.

"He refuses to walk if there is a horse, a car, a wagon, or something to carry him. . . . It is true that the Australians, a small handful at most, have more than justified their methods by the way in which they have tamed their great island continent, fighting back the desert to raise the gardens of Mildura, cleaning up the Wimmera scrub, supplying much of the world's needs of wool, and raising some of the greatest cities of the Empire. But does their peculiar type of genius adapt itself to a trained army in this age of mechanized warfare?

"The answer must be yes—at least as far as the Australians themselves are concerned—but it hinges on something deeper than these superficial traits that have just been described. The Australian, even if he lives in a large city—as forty-seven per cent. of the Australians do—has still a great frontier task in hand. Only the fringe of the great land mass has been completely tamed. Much of the interior is wilderness. The fresh breeze of frontier life accompanies the Australian wherever he goes. But beneath that there are elements in his nature that explain his prowess in social progress and nation-building far more convincingly than his irresponsible outward manner.

"He has, in the first place, a peculiarly well-developed sense of

co-operation. Although acting as independent units, Australians will instinctively see the quickest and best way of co-operating in any task set before them. Whether it is the best way of turning the Murray waters into the desert for irrigation or of turning the trade union system to best advantage, or some other political or social improvement, the Australian shows a special aptitude for quick co-operation. It is this aptitude which will always be available in military operations in the field, no matter what may be the nature of the foe. The officer can feel himself perfectly safe in consulting his privates on a plan of operations, for he can be sure that the quickest way of doing the job, no matter who suggests it, will be promptly seized upon by the rest, who will, despite all outward show of independence, act as a unit in carrying it through.

"This special gift of the Australians, therefore, allows them to preserve a freedom and independence under military discipline that might well be dangerous for other less resourceful and co-operative peoples to attempt.

"Given proper equipment—for the Australian must have his stump-jumping plough, his bulldozer, his Bren-gun carrier, heavy tank, or whatever is necessary for his job in hand—he will meet whatever the totalitarians send against him and show that his air of superiority is no mere pose when it comes to a fight.

"But for all the disconcerting assurance, you may always know that somewhere under that capacious hat there is the strongest possible sense of fair play. Whatever the Australian does, you may be quite sure that it will be 'fair dinkum.' "

I remember meeting one middle-aged company sergeant-major. "I was always a cow of a soldier," he said.

"I hated Army life. I hated the food, I hated the red tape, and I hated the bossing about. In the last war at Gallipoli I said to myself one day: 'A man's a bloody fool to be in the Army. If he had any bloody brains he'd blow the bloody things out. But if he had any brains to blow out he wouldn't be in the bloody Army, anyway.' "

Before the war he had been an analytical chemist, but he'd sold his business to join up. His son was in the Royal Australian Air Force in England flying Spitfires. In the years between the two wars he had served in the peacetime reserve army and the man who was "a cow of a soldier," who hated Army life, was wearing the ribbon of the efficiency medal for twenty years' unbroken military service. He had served throughout the last war as a private and had won the Distinguished Conduct Medal at

Gallipoli. He was the first Digger to earn a bravery decoration in the First World War. In France he won the Croix de Guerre with palms. He was wounded three times and totally blind for four months. And he stayed a private throughout the war because he hated soldiering!

I doubt if there is an Australian soldier in the world who won't say he hates soldiering. Wherever you meet them they are singing doleful songs:

*Let's have a bloody good grizzle,  
Let's have a bloody good cry.  
Always remember the longer you live,  
The sooner you'll bloody well die.*

Ask any of them why they volunteered to fight a war half a world away and they are invariably stuck for an answer. To a man, they will object strenuously if you suggest any patriotic motive. Some will say they were fed up with their jobs; others had rows with their girl friends; one man told me he had joined up because his wife nagged at him for betting on the races.

Most of these explanations are understatements.

In a Queensland camp for reinforcements I asked a young recruit how he liked Army life.

"I hate the bloody Army," he said fiercely.

"Then why did you join the A.I.F.?" I asked.

"Because I hate Mussolini more," he replied, and walked away.

An officer explained to me.

"He had a twin brother. They tossed up to see who would join, because one would have to stay behind and look after their widowed mother. His brother won, and went away with the Sixth Division. At Derna his company was approached by a party of Italians waving white flags. The youngster went forward to take charge of them, and when he got within range of the Dagoes they shot him. He was killed instantly. His mother died a fortnight after the casualty list was published."

There was no understatement in that explanation—"Because I hate Mussolini more."

Forty-four months ago every one of the eight hundred thousand men now in Australian khaki was a civilian. They were uprooted from tens of thousands of little worlds that were bounded by offices and homes and quiet suburban streets. They were bundled into khaki and into a new way of life. For some it was an adventure. For most it was a job to be done. The lures that attracted their fathers into the first A.I.F., generally speaking, were lacking in this Second World War.

"It's no use talking about adventure to most of us," one Digger told me. "We want to get this job over and get back to our jobs and our homes."

That is the predominating viewpoint, not only among the Australian troops, but also among the countless thousands of youngsters in the American Expeditionary Forces. For the men who fight to-day are more serious than their fathers were and they no longer look on war as a grand, new, exciting game. They want to do their job. But most of all they want to get back to those little worlds of offices and homes and quiet suburban streets. And they have no intention of going back until the job is finished.

Every country town in Australia has its little local war memorial of 1914-1918. On them you can read the names of the men who fought in the last war. Then look on the enlistment rolls of any town for this war. You find the same names that are graven in stone outside—the Thompsons and the Smiths, the Mackays, the Thorntons, the Murphys, and the Clarks. Another generation has put to one side the ploughshares and picked up the swords.

I once asked the question of an infantry corporal on the deck of a transport moving out from Sydney bound for Alexandria.

"Why did I join up? It's hard to say," he answered thoughtfully. "It wasn't because of flag-wagging or recruiting rallies or the patriotic posters that stick up everywhere. It's something that's pretty hard to explain. But have you ever seen the fellows and the girls and the kids in the surf at Manly on a midsummer day? Have you ever seen the dust rising from a mob of sheep coming in from the western plains? Have you ever seen the dawn mists swirling around the Blue Mountains or the sun setting over Sydney Harbour? Have you ever walked down a suburban street at dusk in winter and seen the yellow lights in the windows and heard a piano playing and smelt smoke from wood fires? Have you ever leant against the fence of a school and watched the kids coming out at lunchtime?

"I've seen these things, and I guess that's why I'm here now. And somehow I think if we get down to hard facts, that's why most of us are here."

## 5

### THEY SANG "WALTZING MATILDA"

IT IS A CURIOUS THING that many of the most stirring incidents of war are linked with a song. In the mud of Flanders in the last war the men who smashed the Hindenburg Line marched



along a shell-torn road, bearded and grimy, tattered breeches lashed in hessian, and all with heads thrown back as they roared out the chorus of "Tipperary." Doughboys going into action for the first time in the fury of Hamel were singing the lilting "Over There" as if the whole thing were a hayride.

And it's the same thing in this war. The marines who landed at Guadalcanal came ashore in their landing boats and the music of their song echoed from the palm-fringed shore:

*From the halls of Montezuma  
To the shores of Tripoli;  
We will fight our country's battles  
On the land as on the sea. . . .*

In the unbelievable stench and terror of the Buna battlefield I sat one Sunday night around a smouldering campfire and listened to Americans and Australians singing to the tune of a battered concertina. And the song that rose and swelled above the roar of the artillery and the ugly chatter of machine guns was "The Holy City."

When the A.I.F. took its baptism of fire in this war it was hurled against the great Libyan garrison town of Bardia—Mussolini's "Bastion of Fascism." The Diggers clipped bayonets to rifles and moved forward against the outer defences with a full-throated song on their lips and with the freezing dawn wind whipping their greatcoats around their legs. They broke into a run when Italian bullets spat into the sand ahead of them. They were still singing. But it wasn't a patriotic song. They sang "Waltzing Matilda." They sang the quaint, lilting folksong of the Australian outback—a song that meant to them the scent of eucalypts and the hot sunshine shimmering on yellow grass and the blue waters of the reed-fringed billabong, a song that gave them the smell of sheep, and the sound of the summer wind through ripened wheat, the scent of smoke from a pinewood campfire, the picture of a land 10,000 miles away that had never known war. . . .

*Once a jolly swagman camped by a billabong  
Under the shade of a coolibah tree;  
And he sang as he watched and waited till his billy boiled;  
You'll come a-waltzing Matilda with me.  
Waltzing Matilda, waltzing Matilda,  
You'll come a-waltzing Matilda with me.  
And he sang as he watched and waited till his billy boiled:  
You'll come a-waltzing Matilda with me.*

To anyone else the song is just meaningless gibberish. To an Australian the "unofficial national anthem" means everything.

That's why they sang it as they attacked. In that grey dawn, laced with ribbons of tracer bullets and scared by the orange flash of explosions, many young Australians died. And they died with a song on their lips, the song they loved because it somehow expressed something of the land they loved.

The Italian armies under Rodolfo Graziani which had penetrated into Egypt had been hurled back again into their own Libya. British and Australian artillery was pounding the outer defences of Bardia, the fortifications on which the Italians had worked for four long years. In Rome, Mussolini was hastily assuring the chastened home front that he had just had a communication from the defender of Bardia, General Bergonzoli (known to all Australian troops as "Electric Whiskers"), stating that the fortress was impregnable. Mussolini trumpeted on about the Bastion of Fascism, about the decadence of the British Empire, about the folly of attaching too much importance to a few haphazard British raids.

The Aussies hadn't heard Mussolini. At dawn on January 3, 1941, they moved forward. The sun drove oblique rays through the rising dust as the infantry broke into a run, shouting their droll song, racing with levelled bayonets up and down the *wadis*. Position after position was assaulted at bayonet point. The elaborate Italian defence positions crumpled. Hordes of haggard and unshaven Italians poured out of the defence works, hands raised in surrender. They were sent back to their comrades, who were choking the roads behind the lines. As Arthur Merton, the English war correspondent, said: "The key to the British victory was the Australians' epic smash-through. . . ."

One party of 2,000 Italians surrendered to one Australian officer and eight men. Another batch of Italians filed out of their machine-gun posts to surrender to a lone Australian armed with a tommy-gun.

"I'm pretty busy now," said the Australian. "Wait in this *wadi* for me. I'll be back in ten minutes and you can surrender then!"

The Italians sat submissively in the *wadi* until the Australian returned. Then they marched quietly back with him to the area of the battlefield now crowded with thousands of captured Italians!

By sunset the last Italian pockets had been cleaned up. At the cost of 600 British and Australian casualties, Bardia was taken with a total of 38,000 Italians killed or captured (including four generals). The Australians marched cheerfully through the shattered streets singing the strange chorus: "We're off to see the Wizard, the Wonderful Wizard of Oz." They stopped at a

signboard to alter the name of Bardia's main street from "Via Benito Mussolino" to "Via Australia"; to haul down the Italian flag and hoist in its place a dust-covered Australian slouch hat.

The Diggers had won their spurs in the Second World War.

Italy, which had suffered the greatest blow to its military and political prestige since Caporetto, hastily began to protest that the action had been unimportant. Rome Radio, quite forgetting its broadcast of a few weeks before hailing Bardia as the "Bastion of Fascism," deprecatingly announced that: "Undue importance should not be given to the fall of Bardia, which, after all, was only a group of houses around a creek."

The Australians were moving on to attack Tobruk. Again they went in with the bayonet—the weapon which above all others they loved to use. Within thirty-six hours Tobruk had fallen. Later 20,000 Australians, supported by British artillery, were to hold Tobruk for seven long months under constant siege from Rommel's mighty panzer divisions and against the hammering of more than a thousand air attacks. But long before Rommel came into the desert picture the Australians were marching through Benghazi after the conquest of all Cyrenaica. In sixty days the men of Wavell's desert army had made a victorious advance of three hundred miles across the Libyan Desert, had saved Egypt, had smashed the carefully prepared plans of Graziani, and had placed 140,000 Italian soldiers behind the barbed wires of prison compounds.

Other Australians besides the Fighting Sixth were becoming seasoned war veterans. Hundreds of Australian airmen were in England, manning squadrons of Spitfire fighters in the great Battle for Britain, taking their huge Sunderland flying boats over the convoy routes of the Atlantic and the North Sea, freighting loads of high explosives into the heart of Europe, matching their American-built Curtiss Tomahawks against the best fighter planes the Axis had in Africa. Said Paddy Finucane, famous Irish fighter ace who led the Australian Spitfire squadrons in their air battles against the Luftwaffe: "You have only to waggle your wings and these Australians will follow you through hell!"

Already the "air consciousness" that John Curtin had urged years before was being forced upon everybody in Australia. The great Empire Air Training Scheme, formed to establish a vast pool of British and Dominion pilots, gunners, and navigators, was swinging into stride and thousands of Australians were learning the skill and artifice of air war above the lakes and plains and mountains of Canada. The stream of potential Australian flyers—the cream of young Australian manhood—had swollen into a

flood. In the first two years of war Australia had put 48,000 men into Air Force blue and she still had a waiting list of 200,000 young men who had been passed into a reserve pool!

Australia's small Navy—two heavy cruisers, three light cruisers, five destroyers, and a few sloops and corvettes—had been fighting in all the oceans of the world. In the first year of war the *Australia* had blooded her decks in the fierce Battle of Dakar; the *Sydney* had become the outstanding light cruiser of the Mediterranean Fleet, sinking the crack Italian cruiser *Bartolomeo Colleoni*, the destroyer *Espero*, and helping in many other actions. Australian destroyers had served in every naval action in the Mediterranean. The flagship *Canberra* was chasing German raiders in the Indian Ocean.<sup>1</sup>

In the theatres of war overseas Australians were establishing a fine record as fighters, and they were carrying, in ratio to population, a big share of the load of the Empire's war against the Axis. The picture at home was very different. It was the picture of a nation still smugly accepting the fact that "it can't happen here"; a nation which to a large extent had been bled of its best fighting manpower and the bulk of its war material. There were the three partners in the Axis. Two of them, Germany and Italy, were committed to campaigns on the other side of the world. The third, Japan, was the only one that could threaten Australia's security. But Mr. Kawai, the Japanese Minister to Australia, was giving daily assurance of Japan's "Good Neighbour Policy," of her peaceful intentions in the Pacific, of her great desire for full co-operation with Australia to preserve peace in the Pacific. Chinese officials, who had experienced more than a taste of Japan's Good Neighbour Policy, occasionally warned Australia to watch her step. There was, of course, a latent suspicion of Japan, usually expressed in vehement protests against the Australian Government policy of allowing the continuance of shipments of Australian scrap iron to Japan. At that time we did not really think the scrap would be made into munitions which would be used against us; we merely objected to sending scrap to Japan that could be converted into bombs and shells for use against the Chinese. Japan, we thought, was merely the passive partner of the Axis, and she could not afford to turn her attention too far away from the Soviet armies always stationed on the

<sup>1</sup> Proportionately, the Royal Australian Navy has suffered heavier losses than any other navy in the world. Losses included the flagship *Canberra* (while serving with U.S. warships off Guadalcanal), *Sydney* (sunk in the Indian Ocean), *Perth* (sunk in the Battle of the Java Sea), *Waterhen* (sunk off Tobruk), *Parramatta* (destroyed in the Mediterranean), *Yarra* (sunk off Java), *Vampire* (lost in Bay of Bengal), *Armidale* (sunk off New Guinea), and *Voyager* (destroyed in the Dutch East Indies).

Manchukuo frontier. And then, calculated above everything else to build wishful thinking, apathy, and complacency, there was always the Singapore Naval Base. Everybody had spoken of its impregnability. Nobody seemed to realize that the great base had insufficient warships to give it seaward protection, insufficient aircraft to guard it against the new forms of warfare.

So Australia kept sending reinforcements and guns and shells and bombs to the other side of the world, and its home defence army, now very much larger, continued to train with artillery pieces left over from the last war, with insufficient motor transport to go around, and even with some of its infantry soldiers using dummy rifles made of wood.

Australia, in the event of an attack by Japan, would rely largely on geography for defence. The great arid wastes of the north and central areas would be worth countless divisions if war ever came below the Equator. Just in case the unexpected happened, great strategic roads were carved through the wilderness of spinifex desert and through land that had been dead and tortured for countless millennia. But nobody ever thought the unexpected would happen. Nobody could foresee that by March of 1942 Australia would be the last major Allied base remaining in the western Pacific.

The vast size of Australia, coupled with its peculiar physical characteristics, presented problems for the invader even greater than those set for the defender. The continent's coastline extends for 12,210 miles around an area of almost 3,000,000 square miles. The southern half contains the bulk of the population, more than three-fourths of the factories, and all the heavy industries. The vulnerable area was in the north, where 1,000 miles of tangled coastline was almost completely unsupported by population. The northern coast had been known to Japanese pearlcrs and fishermen for almost a century, and the best maps in the world of this area were Japanese charts. In this country, some of it scarcely explored, are vast areas of unknown rain forests, bare deserts, and tangled swamps. One-third of all Australia is within the tropical belt, and here temperatures in the summer rise to 120 degrees Fahrenheit in the shade, in many places exceeding 100 degrees in the shade every day for months at a time, and areas are known that have experienced no rainfall for forty-two years. Five-sevenths of all the Australian population was packed into a fertile coastal belt down the Pacific and southern coasts, a belt varying between 50 and 300 miles in width.

But the so-called "Dead Heart" of Australia—the enormous and silent desert known as the Never-Never—was really dead.

Three hundred thousand white Australians had made their homes in the tropics and they were proud of the fact that they had successfully created the only tropical agriculture in the world worked entirely by white labour. But the Dead Heart had been too much even for these hardy pioneers.

That was the basic reason why a continent almost the same size as the United States supported a population less than that of New York City. Four-fifths of Australia was uninhabitable. The bones of countless pioneers and explorers bleached by the blazing sun of every desert, were mute evidence of the vain attempts that had been made to open up this wild and forbidding land. The Japs, said many, were welcome to it and to all the desolation that went with it. If they could ever reach it. . . .

## MEN CAN LAUGH AT DEATH

ONE OF THE MOST FASCINATING of all studies in time of war is that of the reactions of the individual when he and death stare at each other for interminable seconds. I have seen many men in action. I have seen them in the hell and fury of battle—Australians and Americans, Englishmen and Dutch. I have watched faces, a long line of faces, as men crouched in trenches and poured machine-gun and rifle fire into Japanese positions just ahead. And on every one of twenty faces there wasn't the flicker of an expression. Just twenty emotionless masks. Occasionally a man's lips would move as if he were speaking softly to himself, or cursing, or praying. But in his eyes there was always the hard glaze that drained all aliveness from his face and from the faces of each of his comrades.

If the tension was relieved it was by humour, never by emotion or sentiment or patriotism. If the men were thinking of anything it was usually something far away from the present, completely irrelevant to death and killing and battle. Near the Kumusi River in New Guinea I saw an A.I.F. force surround and surprise the headquarters of General Tomatore Horii, not far from Gorari village. The Australians closed in and struck. For twenty-two minutes they poured devastating fire into the panic-stricken Japanese. In twenty-two minutes more than seven hundred Japanese were slaughtered in a battle known to this day as the "Death Valley Massacre." After it was over I spoke to a young

Australian captain. I asked him what he had been thinking about during the twenty-two minutes of killing. He grinned at me, rather sheepishly.

"As a matter of fact," he said, "the only thing I can remember thinking of was making wet circles on a bar counter in Sydney with the bottom of a beer glass!"

In the bloody fighting for Giropa Point, American infantry had to stand up to three ferocious Japanese counter-attacks within sixty minutes. The dead were littered among the twisted, shredded fragments of coconut palms when I questioned a young Milwaukee private about his reactions to his first full-scale action.

"I've been trying to answer that same goddam question to my own satisfaction ever since I came out of the line," he said disgustedly. "The hell of it is I don't think I know. I guess I must have had a lot of blank spots, because the only damned thing I can remember is that I was trying all the time to think of a wisecrack the sergeant made last night when we were at chow. I still can't remember the damned thing. And I can't ask the sergeant. He was killed in the first attack."

Another American told me that throughout the action only one thought kept running through his mind: an entirely irrelevant fact that he had read the week before in *Guinea Gold* (the Army newspaper in New Guinea), that the Papuan jungle python was not dangerous because it was not venomous and didn't have enough constriction to kill a man!

Those reactions don't make much sense, unless you go into deep and involved Freudian analyses. But another and more common reaction to the perils of battle is apparently common to American and Australian comrades-in-arms—an overwhelming desire to crack a joke in the teeth of death.

That occurred when Ken MacCullar, ace Flying Fortress pilot of the South-west Pacific, took his great bomber down into the flaming jaws of the enemy's anti-aircraft guns at Rabaul after he had unloaded his bombs and contemptuously tossed down an armful of rolls of toilet paper.

It occurred when Bill Benn carried out the first skip-bombing attack on Japanese warships. Bill led his Fortresses in at masthead height through a red curtain of flame and bursting shells. And right at the critical moment of the attack his voice came over the interphones, a voice with a chuckle in it which said, "Don't bomb till you see the whites of their eyes!"

On the battlefield all humour doubles and redoubles in value, but the joke with the macabre twist is both the commonest and the most appreciated. And the memories of war which remain

longest in one's mind are the memories that have in them something of humour, however grim.

I remember one scene in an American mobile hospital unit which had been set up only a few days before within gunshot of the forward Japanese positions near Buna. The rain outside was a glassy sheet. When you stood at the tent opening you could see a vague, shadowy figure reflected in the rain. It was your own figure. Sweat was dripping from the foreheads of two young American doctors, both stripped to the waist. Their boots sucked in the soft mud of the tent floor when they moved. The operating table was a bench of rough logs lashed together and covered with a khaki Army blanket. The mud was ankle deep through most of the tent. The sterilizer was a camp dixie standing over an open fire that burned smokily in the humid atmosphere. The doctors worked silently on the job of extracting a mortar fragment from the head of a man, naked as the day he was born, grey with the dried mud that caked him from his feet to his hips, breathing in heavy gasps.

Outside was the jumpy undertone of a Browning machine gun. Once the sudden flurried roar of a tommy-gun. Gun flashes threw weird lights on the falling rain. Inside on a felled coconut trunk sat twelve dishevelled men. Some had their heads down in their hands. Others leaned back with their mouths hanging loosely. Some sat erect, staring interestedly at the operation, wondering, perhaps, whether theirs would look something the same. The whole scene was a fantastic caricature of a barber shop. It became even more so a moment later when one of the doctors, his face haggard, finished the job and signalled for the patient to be trundled out on a stretcher. The less seriously wounded men who had been standing in a rough circle pointing flashlights at the operating table relaxed their arms with a scarcely audible sigh that was merely an outlet for the immense, silent tension. Half a dozen beams of light danced on the churned mud of the floor. The shadows of men were flung suddenly, gigantically, against the tent wall. The doctor looked along the line of waiting men, pointed:

"You're next," he said wearily.

An Australian grinned sheepishly, walked over to the table. His left arm from the elbow down was red and pulpy like raw steak. He winked self-consciously at the American.

"Not too short at the back an' sides, doc," he said.

There was a ripple of laughter through the tent as the macabre similarity to a barber-shop occurred to all the men at the same time.



In the same hospital two days later I saw another incident that reflected the grim humour of the battlefield. An American surgeon was examining the mortar wound which had slashed the shoulder of an Australian corporal. When the doctor had finished the Australian opened his mouth to speak, baring toothless gums.

"Doc," he said, "do you think you could fix me up with a couple of plates of teeth?"

"Hell, this is no Rockefeller Foundation," said the doctor, grinning. "What happened to your teeth?"

"Well, doc, I always take the blasted things out before I go into action. They get in my road. I wrap 'em up in my handkerchief and hide 'em in a safe place an' then go back for 'em when the show's over."

"If you put 'em in a safe place, you should be able to remember where they are, then."

"Oh, I know where they are all right!"

"Well, give me the directions and I'll send a runner out to get them for you."

The Australian pondered this for a few moments.

"No, doc," he said at length. "Mightn't be a good idea. You see, I stuck 'em in the bushes just about twenty yards away from a Nip machine-gun nest that we attacked with the bayonet an' grenades. Only trouble was we didn't take the bloody post!"

In the days when the Japs were indulging, more or less uninterruptedly, in mass bombing of Port Moresby, the darkness of the days was brightened by the flashing humour of the troops. There was scarcely an air raid that didn't produce it's crop of funny stories. Most of them concerned the Negro troops, who were doing magnificent engineering construction work in the garrison at that time.

A big Japanese raider formation came over the day that the troops received their first issue of "Spam." As usual, they came over during the lunch hour. Japanese bombers are usually camouflaged for noon bombing, out of the sun. The sirens wailed in the Negro camp and a tide of coloured soldiery swept toward the foxholes, temporarily abandoning their plates of food. All except one man. Halfway to the trenches he stopped, stood stock-still for a moment and then began to sprint back to the mess hut. His buddy, already in the trench, peered over the parapet with rolling eyes.

"Where's yo'-all goin', Benson?" he yelled.

Benson, breaking evens across the rough ground, scarcely turned his head:

"Ah's gwin t' git mah chow," he shouted.

The man in the trench rolled his eyes up to the cloudless sky.

"Yo'-all better come right back here, Benson. This no tahn t'be thinkin' abaht chow. Those boys up there ain't a-droppin' ham san'wiches!"

Even better, perhaps, was the remark of another Negro soldier who had taken shelter in a foxhole with his buddy. The Mitsubishi's were in diamond formation overhead—eighteen tiny silver specks moving steadily through the cottonwool puffs of anti-aircraft fire.

"Better git raht down, Joe," he said solemnly, nudging his friend in the back. "Those fellers up there is sho' colour blind!"

"What you mean—colour blind?" queried the other Negro.

"Press yo' belly to th' earth an' don't ask stupid questions," retorted the first Negro. "Those Nips cain't tell black from white!"

From all the squalor and bitterness and tragedy of war there is a lot of fun to be extracted if you have the right outlook. I guess, when it's all boiled down, that's why the Americans and Australians are such good allies. They have the same sense of humour:

## II. THE FIRST TWO YEARS

### 7

#### POLITICAL SWITCH-OVER

AUSTRALIA HAD COMPLETED ALMOST two years of war under the Nationalist (Conservative Party) Government and under a coalition Nationalist-Country Party Ministry when the Labour Government came into power on October 7, 1941. John Curtin, former editor of a trade union newspaper, became Prime Minister of Australia. It was a time of acute crisis. Pearl Harbor and the war in the Pacific were exactly two months away, but already the Far East cauldron was simmering. Australian fighting strength was to a large extent dissipated over a number of fronts, most of them on the other side of the world.

Curtin settled down to face a task tougher than that which any previous Australian Prime Minister had been called upon to tackle. He selected his Cabinet Ministers exclusively from the ranks of the Labour Party. He had a tough Parliament to handle, with the balance of power more or less in the hands of a couple of Independent members, both of whom were believed to have a right-wing tendency in their personal interests, but who felt that a better war effort would come from a Government tending towards the left. Curtin gave no sop to these men in the way of ministerial appointment. They would support him or oppose him on the strength of his decisions, he said. He would stand or fall by his ability to do the job.

And the frail, quietly-spoken little man settled down to make Australian history.

His Cabinet for war was almost exclusively a Cabinet of workers. His Air Minister had been a locomotive driver, and still remained an officer of the powerful locomotive engineers' union. His tough, hard-boiled Supply Minister had begun life as a barber. His Army Minister (and Deputy Prime Minister) was a teacher of electrical engineering. His Navy Minister was a pattern-maker who was also a lay preacher. Only two men in his Cabinet had not, for most of their lives, worked with their sleeves rolled up to earn a living in the low-bracket group of wage earners. The exceptions were Dr. Herbert Vere Evatt, Curtin's

Attorney-General and Minister for External Affairs, who had sacrificed his job as judge of the High Court of Australia to fight and win a federal seat as a Labour candidate; and Chifley, the treasurer, who was the wealthy owner of a provincial newspaper with pronounced leanings toward Labour.

Labour politics down under are to a certain extent the natural carry-over of the sentiments which were fought for by liberty-loving individualists in the pioneering days of gold-mining, ranching, and the sheep-shearing sheds. Political reforms came thick and fast, and they came early. In some of the Australian states, free secular education has been compulsory for seventy years! Women's suffrage was adopted by the Commonwealth of Australia in 1902. Even before the creation of a Commonwealth finally absorbed the independent states in 1900, Labour influence was exceedingly strong. Federation was first established under a Nationalist Government, but its successor was Labour, and the Prime Minister of this second Federal Government, John Watson, was the world's first Labour Prime Minister.

Curtin's was the eighth Labour Government to hold office in the forty-one years since federation. Four of the six subsidiary state governments under the Federal Government were Labour, and two of them—Queensland and Tasmania—have been under Labour control almost continuously for twenty years.

Labour—sometimes militant, sometimes passive—has stood as the party of social reform in Australia almost since the dawn of the century and, with all its faults, it has undoubtedly been the major factor in initiating and stimulating much of the social legislation which has for three decades made Australia known the world over as one of the most liberal and progressive of the world's democracies. It pioneered the system of industrial arbitration courts which has long had the complete support of all political parties and all social classes.<sup>1</sup> Labour also created the Commonwealth Bank, one of the world's first central banks.

<sup>1</sup> "The underlying principle of the Australian arbitration system is that arbitration should be a substitute for direct action and should be founded on the principles of responsibility, fairness and justice. The practical effect of this is that when an employer and his employees fail to see eye to eye and cannot settle their dispute, there is neither a lockout by the employer, nor a strike by the workmen. Either side can take the case before the Arbitration Court, where, first, conciliation is sought. Failing that, a fair and acceptable solution is determined by the judge, after having heard the case presented by both sides. Wages are related to the cost of living by regular automatic quarterly adjustments of the 'basic' wage, to accord with variations in purchasing power as disclosed by index numbers prepared by the Commonwealth statistician."—H. J. Timperley, in *Australia and the Australians*.

Curtin took office at a time when war and defence overshadowed everything else, even the social reformation that was basic in Labour policy. In martial matters, however, he had Labour precedent to follow. The Royal Australian Navy, which had fought so valiantly in two wars, was the creation of an earlier Labour Government. The national militia—a citizen defence army—had been created by Labour as a system which it thought was preferable to a professional standing army. And Curtin himself, long before he came to power as Prime Minister, had declared Labour's new war aims in his defence policy based on the creation of Australian air power.

It is, of course, unfair and inaccurate to suggest that Australia's war effort did not really start until Curtin's team took up the harness.

The Menzies and the Fadden governments (Fadden was Prime Minister for a mere two months) had done a tremendous amount towards putting the nation on a war footing, but the *direction* of the war effort had largely been dictated by British requirements. The Conservatives gambled on Australia's geographical remoteness to guard it against any actual threat. The gamble came off, but there were times when that was more good luck than good judgment. And eventually it was only the assistance that came from the United States that saved Australia—the assistance given by the pursuit planes and bombers so sorely needed to stop the pellmell rush of the Japanese southward from the Equator.

As David Bailey, top Australian newspaperman, said: "The bombs that fell on Hawaii blasted away the security Australia had felt in 3,000 miles of sea between herself and the nearest potentially hostile territory." They also blasted away most of Australia's earlier ideas about international affairs.

There was no reluctance on the part of Australian fighting men to give battle to Britain's enemies ten thousand miles away from their homeland. On the contrary, there was an eager desire to do that very thing. In fact, when Australian troops were brought back to take part in the defence of their own country they were rather crestfallen, even a little resentful, at being pulled out of a fight they had started, but hadn't yet been able to finish.

Nor was there any selfishness in the British attitude. Britain at that time was fighting with her back to the wall with the full knowledge that if she collapsed all world democracy collapsed. And the help that Australia was able to give her in such active war theatres as Libya, the Mediterranean, and England was invaluable. When Australia herself was threatened, Churchill hastened to allot to the beleaguered continent down under

squadrons of Spitfires and Beaufighters and other equipment so desperately needed to meet the new menace of Nippon. Because of her own requirements and the urgent demands on shipping space, however, Britain could not hope to supply Australia with anywhere near what she really needed. A new voice and a strong voice began to be heard in the councils of the United Nations—a voice that turned to the United States for aid in meeting the new Pacific menace. It was the voice of John Curtin.

Before that time, in the first two years of war, Australia had achieved a war potential which would have been regarded as impossible in the days immediately after Munich. Outlying garrisons had been established. It is true that there was difficulty in supplying them adequately, because priorities had to go to the A.I.F. troops actually engaged in battle overseas. A great network of strategic roads had been established through the desert wastes and the little-known wilderness of the arid core of the continent—roads that would at least help to overcome the vast transportation problems of a country that had been developed only around the edges, and even there had been developed in such a patchwork fashion that rail gauges were broken and no through transportation was possible without reshipment.

In two years a country that had started almost completely from scratch had 635,000 men and women in full-time war work; 218,000 voluntarily enlisted for overseas fighting service in the A.I.F., the Navy and the Air Force; 220,000 in the home defence forces (comprising both draftees and volunteers), and 197,000 in war production factories.

By the end of the second year of war the people of Australia were beginning to think that they had pulled their belts in as tightly as they would go. At a Press conference Curtin was told that the home front believed it had reached the limit of its sacrifices. Curtin grinned. "Well," he said, "as somebody else once said: 'They ain't heard nothin' yet!'"

He had begun his plans to regiment Australia for total war before the onrushing tide of Nippon reached Australian territory. By the time the Japanese were occupying points in the great tropical island chain north of the continent every Australian citizen found his life being keyed by a new word: "austerity." Curtin's campaign was "Austerity Living." And he meant it. He forced no sacrifice or hardship on his people that he did not accept himself. The land of "Too Much"—the land of great surpluses—became the "Land of Go Without." Direct taxation was piled on the people until it became heavier in Australia than anywhere else in the British Empire. Civilians went without food

and went without clothing so that the men in khaki could be fed and clothed. Every aspect of national life was subordinated to the needs of the fighting men. For the first time in 156 years of history Australia became short of "tucker" (Australian slang for food) and short of many other things, too. Men were called up from the farms, and group farming was inaugurated to solve manpower difficulties.

Using the homely phrases of the Australian countryman, Curtin made a simple declaration of his policy regarding the problems of rural manpower:

"If I have to take a chance of being short of tucker in six or twelve months' time or being short of fighting personnel in the next six months, the risk I am taking is being short of tucker!"

## 8

### WORLD BATTLEFRONT

**T**HE FIRST TWO YEARS OF WAR had added many new battle honours to the brief martial record of Australia—honours won on a battlefield that reached from the Atlantic to the Pacific, from the Arctic to the Antarctic, from the mountains of Abyssinia to the ravines of Greece, from the olive groves of Syria to the pockmarked cliffs of Crete.

Outstanding of all Australian feats had been the holding of the Siege of Tobruk, a military operation that gleamed like a bright jewel throughout the blackest days of the African campaign.

The British Army of the Nile, depleted in numbers and supplies, was reeling back from Benghazi before the hammer-blows of an enemy whose strength had been immeasurably increased by swarms of dive-bombers and scurrying tanks, given by Hitler to bolster the shattered remnants of Graziani's army. Rommel had come to the desert. Wavell's advance into the Western Desert, which had conquered all Cyrenaica, within fifty-five days had become a retreat. Some of his best troops had gone to Greece, and thousands of the men fighting the rearguard action through blinding dust-storms were experiencing their first real action. Australia's Sixth Division, which had taken Bardia and Tobruk at bayonet-point, had been withdrawn from North Africa to fight in Greece. To replace them the Ninth Division had gone into Libya, more for training than anything else, because it was felt

that no major action would be fought in the Western Desert for months. Intelligence was wrong. The sudden German-Italian drive against Benghazi caught us with dangerously weakened forces, and the retreat back along the road of victory was inevitable.

The raw Australians tasted their first battle: the German tank onslaught on the Benghazi defences; retreat—the whine of bombs and the crash of shells; retreat—the fine sand rising in clouds from the steel avalanche of the German panzers, dead men and wounded men; retreat—the Arabs who had sworn undying friendship with the Aussies cursing them and stoning them as they fought a bitter rearguard action without adequate equipment; retreat—and Good Friday and the white town of Tobruk lying at the end of a two-mile inlet in the blue Mediterranean.

And there, for all the Australians and some of the British and Indian troops, the march back ended. For more than seven bitter months the tiny garrison was to be held against a thousand bombing attacks; against repeated attempts by Rommel's panzers to drive the British from their last stronghold in Libya. It was one of the most memorable sieges in British military history—the Siege of Tobruk.

In the months to come Berlin and Rome were repeatedly to announce that the defenders of Tobruk had been "driven underground like rats." But the entire weight of German and Italian arms in Libya couldn't smoke them out. And these raw soldiers, glorying in the name they gave themselves—the "Rats of Tobruk"—were to give the enemy a new conception of courage and resource and stamina in the face of great odds. The Australians had previously conquered Tobruk in thirty-six hours. Now they had to prove that they were capable of holding its one hundred square miles of perimeter defences against anything that Rommel could throw against them. They did hold it—for seven terrible months—and they never yielded an inch of the one hundred square miles!

And they not only defended—they attacked. Every night raiding parties were out, severing German high tension wires six miles inside enemy lines, blowing up supply dumps, stealing gasoline, painting "V for Victory" signs on the German headquarters tents!

Every dugout and every trench crawled with lice, and the fine talcum dust of the desert penetrated every inch of clothing and every scrap of food. Artillery and dive-bombing attacks came every day and every night. There were days of fierce offensive and counter-offensive, of bloody hand-to-hand fighting with rifle



and bayonet and even with bare hands, of deeds of unforgettable heroism.

There was the story of four hundred men of a Victorian infantry battalion who were told to hold twenty-two concrete posts which the Italians had built around a vital section of the perimeter. Against this sector was hurled the whole weight of Rommel's heaviest attack. The Australian positions were first dive-bombed and strafed by more than fifty German planes. The air bombardment lasted for fifty minutes and was followed by a five-hour artillery bombardment which plastered the whole line with shrapnel and high explosive. Under cover of the barrage German infantry surrounded the posts, cutting in behind them. The Australians were engaged from all sides. They were ordered to hold the position because the enemy tanks could not press on into the heart of the Tobruk defences until the perimeter positions were taken. And the Australians held their positions, even against a final attack by fifty heavy tanks which lasted three hours. The Germans couldn't consolidate. Their infantry failed to occupy the territory that had been overrun by the tanks. After twenty-four hours the German offensive was called off. Inside the Australian lines fewer than one hundred of the original four hundred remained alive.

These were the men who had been sent into the Libyan Desert for training. It was their first major action, and they were opposed by seasoned troops—Germans who had fought in Poland and Norway and in the great *Blitzkrieg* against the Low Countries. Yet with all their weight of tanks and dive-bombers the Nazis were held and repulsed by a mere handful of Diggers armed with rifles and bayonets and machine guns and a few pieces of artillery.

The Australians went into Tobruk in April. They had their backs to the Mediterranean and the nearest British outpost at Sollum was one hundred miles away across enemy-held desert. In November reinforcements were sent and the Australians were withdrawn for a rest. Grey warships of the Royal Navy came to take them away and to bring in the British and Polish troops who would replace them.

In the darkness the clang and thud of cargo being discharged mingled with the rhythmic tramp of marching feet. Not a cigarette was lighted. There was no other sound but the sibilant whispering of men as the Australians marched toward the waiting ships. They passed a long file of steel-helmeted British troops coming from the dock to relieve them. No voice was raised above the pitch of normal conversation as the old and new defenders of Tobruk passed, but there was no doubt of the comradeship.

"Good luck, chums," said the British. "You've done a right good job. Good luck."

And the answer came back from a hundred Australian throats, an answer that rippled down the ranks softly: "Thanks, sport. Good luck to you, Tommy." Then, as an ironical afterthought: "Keep off the beer an' don't trust the women!"

Stifled laughter drowned for a moment the tramp of marching feet.

The Aussies lolled against the ship rails, looking toward the dark mysterious shore of the port they had defended for seven months. Many of their comrades were buried in the sands of the Libyan Desert, out there beyond the battered hulks lying near the beach. But many more Germans and Italians had been buried in the same sands.

Coughing and sneezing continually cracked the silence. Almost every man, bodily resistance lowered by months of hardship and canned food, was suffering from a chest cold. The men were not sorry to be leaving Tobruk, for ahead of them was Egypt and leave and cold beer and luxurious baths and showers and movies and pretty women. But all of them had a strange, unreasonable feeling of regret that they were leaving the ugly, inhospitable land.

The grey ships began to move out. A lone Australian voice cried out into the Libyan night:

"Good-bye, Tobruk. You weren't such a bad bloody 'ole after all!"

The fathers of these men had written one name into Australian history—Gallipoli. Their sons had added another—Tobruk. . . .

War casualty lists, already occupying columns in the newspapers of Australia, grew longer as the sparks of Axis aggression fired the tinderbox of the Balkans. The Sixth Australian Division, as part of the Anzac Corps which made up the bulk of the Empire's infantry and artillery forces in Greece, swiftly forgot their first sweet taste of Libyan victory in the bitterness of Greek defeat. Through the flurried snow of the Grecian mountains they tried not once but many times to stem the steel avalanche that Hitler hurled down through Monastir Gap. They fought fiercely because they fought with little hope of salvation, and they slashed German units to pieces as they fell back. Australians and New Zealanders fighting shoulder to shoulder against German tank divisions supported by swarms of Stukas and Messerschmitts which held utter monopoly of the grey, storm-torn skies. Pinios Gorge was choked with German corpses and the river ran red

with their blood; the plains of Thessaly were littered with Nazi dead when the Germans advanced like Greeks on this ancient Grecian battlefield, with their infantry in solid phalanxes six lines deep, phalanxes that were scythed down like ripe corn by the concentrated machine-gun fire of the Anzacs. The agonizing retreat continued, day after day, through a pitiless hail of high explosives rained down from the swarming planes of the Luftwaffe. Behind the Allies, German paratroops were landing to cut the line of retreat. A German aerial armada was plastering every bay and port likely to be of use as an evacuation point. Piræus was a shambles.

It was on April 25 that the evacuation of the Anzacs began. And April 25 was "Anzac Day"—the day which for twenty-five years every Australian and New Zealander had commemorated with homage to the dead who had given their lives on the bloody cliffs of Gallipoli on that first Anzac Day of April 25, 1915, when Anzacs first proved their right to nationhood. And on the eve of Anzac Day, in a shell-torn valley only two hundred and twenty miles away from those cliffs, the new Anzacs, starving, battered, wearied almost to the point of death, stood at positions to man the rearguard lines. Tanks were hammering at the flanks, dive-bombers always roaring overhead. Australian artillery, New Zealand infantry, a British anti-tank regiment, stood firm for the Empire's last stand in Greece, while their dead piled higher all about them. Because of the stand of that little band, tens of thousands of other men were able to get into the evacuation ships and head south to safety. Few of the rearguard survived, but of 60,000 Empire troops who fought the bloody fight from Monastir Gap down the length of Greece to the Peloponnesian beaches, 48,000 were evacuated to fight again.

The men who lived and the men who died knew that they had held the full weight of a mighty German army for nineteen terrible days and their lines had never once cracked. On one front 700 New Zealanders had fought back 25,000 Germans for two days and nights. Single Australian battalions stood up against—and, for a time, held back—two German divisions.

Greece was another British defeat. But the Germans had suffered immense casualties in men and materials; and the British at least had the satisfaction of knowing that they had fought for—and won—a breathing space that was to be of untold value in the future of the Mediterranean campaign.

There was sorrow in Australia, for casualties had been heavy. But there was also a deep pride. For it had been the Australians who had held historic Thermopylæ Pass against overwhelming

odds, just as the Spartans, under Leonidas had held it centuries before when "Persian arrows obscured the sun."

The island of Crete—with its quiet, tinkling streams and stern rugged mountains—became the clearing house for the muddy, bloodstained men in ragged khaki who stumbled ashore, eyes glazed with exhaustion; men with no clothing except life-jackets around their waists; men whose boots had gone and who hobbled along with strips of blanket tied around their bleeding feet. They marched away from Suda Bay when they were told to march. But as soon as they were given the order to halt they dropped in their tracks. Every road was crowded with men sleeping in the dirt, too weary to go forward another inch.

Within a day or two they were transforming quiet olive groves into grim machine-gun nests, digging trenches along the beaches, setting up anti-aircraft guns near the Island's airfields. The Germans came, as everybody knew they would come, at dawn on May 20, 1941. There was little defensive equipment on Crete. Many of the Australians, still without uniforms, fought in the clothing of Cretan shepherds. The Stukas and Messerschmitts came first, to blast away the defences. Then came the gliders and troop transports like a swarm of locusts. One Australian anti-aircraft battery fought back for five hours against a total of 405 German fighters and dive-bombers and 150 huge, lumbering Junkers troop transports. Without air support, all the defence of the island was centred in the gunners. This one battery brought seventy-three machines down in flames, including sixteen troop-carriers shot down in five minutes! A sister battery got twenty-three. Ten thousand enemy paratroops were killed or wounded out of a total of 50,000 which the Germans threw into the battle. More than 1,300 aircraft of all types were used (half of them old corks re-engined and rebuilt simply to make the seventy-five-mile journey from Greece to Crete and then to be crash-landed) and 850 were destroyed. But the Allies could not fight back forever against the endless plague of men and machines that came from the skies. And there was no plane in operation over the island whose wings did not carry the black cross of Germany.

The Battle for Crete became a strange mob-fight of skirmishes and raids and fluctuating battles. One Australian unit, almost without equipment, captured several German machine guns but soon exhausted the ammunition. In the uniform of a dead German officer they found a code for making communications by coloured symbols with supply aircraft. The Australians signalled

the German planes and gratefully accepted the cases of ammunition promptly dropped for them by parachute!

Once two Australian battalions and a New Zealand Maori battalion were able to form a line and counter-attack with the bayonet. They hurled the Germans back for a mile and a half. But the Nazis were pouring in munitions and reinforcements at will.

Withdrawal to the south coast beaches of Sphakia became inevitable. In all of the Allied force able to stagger across the jagged mountains to safety there was sufficient ammunition only for one battalion. The 2/7th Battalion of the Australian Imperial Force was the unit selected to use that ammunition to hold off the Germans while the evacuation was carried out.

Against the ridge which the gallant little force selected for their stand the Germans hurled wave after wave of infantry. The Aussies held. Below them, on the beaches, hundreds of their comrades were wading out to the waiting ships. The men on the ridge knew that the time limit set by the Navy had expired. They knew that the ships were heading away from the island across the blue waters of the Mediterranean. The ranks of the rearguard were sadly thinned now. Ammunition was almost all gone. The men did not look back. They had nothing to hope for now, nothing but death or imprisonment. But still the guns roared and chattered at the advancing Germans, still the ridge was held.

Then the survivors clambered down the precipitous cliffs to the deserted beach of Sphakia, formed into line on the trampled sand, marched with squared shoulders and swinging arms to the water's edge. Behind them came other men supporting the wounded. On the ridge above lay the dead. At the crisp command of a twenty-three-year-old officer, the men turned, formed their lines, and with their backs to the open sea—and safety—waited for the Germans to come. They came in endless waves. Until the last bullet was spent the shattered force held their lines. Not until then did the survivors surrender. The little armada that was carrying hundreds of their comrades to safety was now hull-down over the horizon. . . .

To the names that will live forever in the history of Australia add another—Sphakia.

The A.I.F. was to fight still another tough campaign in the Middle East before any of the troops were to see Australia again. This time the Australians were fighting the French, their former allies, in the struggle for control of Syria. They fought in the ancient land of Og, King of Bashan; in the land where the forces

of Byzantium and Egypt, of Greece and Rome, of the Ottoman Empire and the Israelites, of Hittites and Ammonites, had lived and died for causes now forgotten; where Crusader met Saracen, and where the galleys of the old Phoenician traders went out from Tyre and Sidon across the ruffled waters of the Middle Sea.

The Allies did not wait for Germany to commit another act of aggression. Britain struck first. Syria, under the domination of Hitler's puppets, Pétain and Darlan, was co-operating with the Axis, hostile to the British. The influx of German "tourists" and transport planes made it clear that Syria was intended as the gateway through which the Axis would march into Asia, toward the rich oil-fields of Iraq and the Persian Gulf. On June 7, 1941, the Syrian campaign began when Australian, British, and Fighting French forces moved across the Palestine frontier in a three-pronged thrust against the professional soldiers of the French Foreign Legion, Moroccan and Senegalese regulars, Druse cavalry, and French armoured units—seasoned fighters all of them.\*

One column of Australians struck along the coast toward Sidon. Fighting in the steep ravines and amid the tumbled rocks was cruel and costly. Tiny groups of men clambered up terrible cliffs and mountain-sides to outflank enemy positions. In a score of valleys, on a dozen hills, small parties of Aussies fought bloody hand-to-hand duels with the courageous French. Bloodstained men fought single-handed battles on the edge of a yawning abyss. No quarter was asked, none given. Slowly the French were pressed back, slowly the Australians took ridge after ridge, battled their way across the mountains toward Sidon.

Meanwhile a second group of Australians had struck inland toward Merjyun. The drive began as an attempt at "peaceful penetration." The Australians were ordered to wear their slouch hats, not their steel helmets. Within a few hours they had thrown the hats away and were fighting desperately for their lives. Instead of a peaceful penetration they had a bloody battle for every inch of the road to Merjyun, which they conquered four days later. This was country where mechanized units were useless. Scout cars and three-ton trucks gave way to mule-trains and pack-horses. One mechanized cavalry unit abandoned its armoured carriers and mounted itself on stolen horses. Theirs was a story of wild exploits in the ravines where they terrorized the French with sabre and bayonet.

A third Australian force formed the spearhead of a Fighting French contingent and succeeded, with terrible casualties, in taking the Foreign Legion forts, cutting the Damascus-Beirut road, and opening the way to the ancient city of Damascus.

Last stronghold to resist was the key fortress of Damour, located at the peak of a series of terrible mountains and chasms. For the storming of the Damour Heights picked Australian troops were selected, the men who had already seen action in Greece, Libya, and Crete. The Vichy commanders later admitted that they believed no troops could cross that terrible expanse of ravines and beetling cliffs while positions on the heights were being strongly defended. It was a historical occasion for the Australians. For the first time in the history of the Commonwealth a combined operation was carried out by the three Australian fighting services—the Australian Imperial Force, the Royal Australian Navy, and the Royal Australian Air Force.

The superhuman task of surmounting the hills and bridging the ravines was carried out by the Australian ground troops under cover of darkness, in the face of intense shelling and machine-gun fire. At dawn the opposition became fiercer. But the Australians had learned the art of stalking in the bitter fighting in Greece and Crete. A young corporal, bleeding from two wounds, led the survivors of his section through machine-gun cross-fire to storm Vichy positions at bayonet point and overpower them. A Victorian captain was faced with the task of crossing a great gash in the mountainside which was swept by fire from artillery and machine guns, of attacking up a steep slope, and of penetrating and subduing a line of twenty-nine enemy machine-gun posts. He and his men did the job.

Australian fighter squadrons (American-built Curtiss P40s) and Australian bombers were overhead. Offshore the Australian destroyers and the Australian light cruiser *Perth* hammered salvos into the Vichy artillery positions. The desperate fighting continued in ravines and on cliffs. French troops, even the crack Chasseurs Alpins, were forced back, losing position after position in fierce hand-to-hand fighting. At dawn on July 9, three days after the Battle of Damour had begun, the town was in Australian hands.

While armistice terms were being discussed the troops, oblivious of any plans for peace, pushed on with the job of war. At midnight on July 12 the "cease fire" order was given and the Battle for Syria was over. In the five weeks' campaign some of the most spectacular fighting of the Middle East had been seen. There had been innumerable examples of personal heroism. Two of Australia's Victoria Crosses were won in Syria. At Iskandaroun, one Australian lieutenant with six men had captured fifty prisoners, forty cavalry horses, two machine-gun carriers, nine machine guns, and a trench mortar.

Lieutenant A. R. Cutler, a twenty-five-year-old Sydney

University graduate who stood six feet five inches in his socks, had lost his leg, but won the Victoria Cross in "one of the most gallant feats of Australian military history." After many acts of great heroism he went into the town of Merjiyun to establish a forward observation post for his artillery. The town was strongly held by the French Foreign Legion, but the most suitable observation post was in the town itself. Cutler squirmed his way in, set up his post in an old house. The Legionnaires were all around him. They had strong forces massing for a counter-attack that would cut him off from his own forces. He calmly continued the job of registering for his battery, although he himself was concealed right in the centre of the target toward which he was directing a tremendous Australian artillery barrage!

The survivors of the Australian division that had marched across the Palestine border into Syria were sent up into the snows of the Lebanon to rest. They skated and skied. None of them could have guessed that their next campaign would be fought in the stinking, steaming jungles of New Guinea. . . .

Thousands of other Australians were fighting on a battlefield that took in half the world. Over the North Sea and the Atlantic Ocean ranged the great Sunderland flying boats of the R.A.A.F. In the terrible airfights of the Battle for Britain, Australian Hurricane and Spitfire squadrons had stood off the best the Nazis could throw against them. Small parties of Australians fought with the Abyssinian patriots in the mountains of Ethiopia. Australians were training in jungle fighting in the steamy heat of Malaya. Australian bombers were hitting Hamm and Bremen, Berlin, and Essen, Genoa and Sardinia, Norway and the occupied countries of Holland and France. The ships of the Royal Australian Navy were hunting down raiders in the Indian Ocean and the Atlantic, convoying in the North Sea, fighting with Cunningham's Mediterranean Fleet in the battles for the control of that vital waterway which Mussolini once bombastically called an "Italian lake." Australian sloops were patrolling the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf. Australia's battlefield was a world at war.

## 9

### ORIENTAL BOIL-OVER

THE THUNDER OF FALLING BOMBS on Pearl Harbor and Hickham Field not only brought America as a fighting partner into the second World War; it brought large-scale conflict for



the first time to the largest ocean of the world, and to many of the nations fringing it. Australia's war policy was reoriented overnight. Within two months more than 18,000 of Australia's best troops were to be prisoners of the Japanese. Within little more than two months bombs were to fall for the first time on the Australian continent. And in that short time Australia changed from a nation fighting for democracy on foreign shores and battle fields, with place-names as hard to pronounce as they were to locate on the war maps, to a nation fighting a war of self-preservation with its back to the wall.

Despite the growing desperation of her own plight, Australia in general continued to interpret global war in the way in which it thought the United Nations cause would suffer least. Troops were withdrawn from foreign battle areas to defend their homeland, but they were not taken if their withdrawal would affect Allied strategy. One of Australia's finest assault divisions, with reinforcements sufficient to make up almost a second division, was left in Africa for twelve months because to bring it home would have disorganized the careful plans of Generals Alexander and Montgomery. And it was a year after Japan first attacked Australian territory that these troops—30,000 of the best-trained soldiers in the Australian Imperial Force—took part in the first smashing of Rommel's line at El Alamein, 6,000 miles from home. Later, when General Alexander attended a parade to commemorate the thousands of "fallen comrades" who had died in the epic charge that rolled Rommel's lines back, he paid to the Australians one of the grandest tributes any soldiers have ever received. "No matter what happens in this war there is one thing I shall always be able to say, one thing that will give me greater pride than anything else," he said. "I shall be able to say that once there fought under my command the Ninth Australian Division."

Before Japan entered the war Australia's famous No. 3 Squadron, flying American-made P40s, had brought down their one-hundredth Axis plane over the Libyan Desert. They, too, stayed in the desert to bring their tally of Messerschmitts and Stukas and Capronis and Focke-Wulfs to two hundred.

Nevertheless, Australia's chief preoccupation was Japan. We had to fight in the Pacific, too. The A.I.F. was sent forward to meet the Japanese as they pushed down the Malay Peninsula; and at every step in the southern offensive of Nippon Australian troops were on hand to give battle to them—in Singapore, in the Dutch East Indies, in Java, in Timor, in Ambon, in Rabaul, in Port Moresby, and in Australia. In all the garrisons except Port Moresby and Australia, 99 per cent. of the men never came

home. The redemption of these men is as important to Australia as the redemption of the men of Bataan and Wake Island is to the United States. . . .

Among English-speaking peoples the primary risk in the Pacific was borne by Australia and New Zealand. British newspapers could call it "War in the Far East." But Britain's "Far East" was Australia's "Near North."

For many years Australia had had no real foreign policy of its own. The formal conduct of foreign relations was left to Great Britain. It was not until the Peace Conference which followed the first World War that Australia had its first serious split with Britain on a question of foreign affairs. Australia, at the beginning of World War I, had fought for and conquered the German possessions in the islands of the New Guinea archipelago immediately off the northern coast of Australia. And Australia insisted, against considerable opposition, that she should retain control of that island bastion. Australia gives thanks to-day for that firmness of decades ago. For in 1942, when these very islands became the scene of great battles for command of the Western Pacific, enough of the area was held by Australian troops and airmen to be retained as the main Allied bastion against Japan's southward drive.

The outbreak of war with Japan in 1941 ended for Australia a long period of watchful waiting and divided opinion. It also ended the appeasement which had been a feature of Empire policy for so long. After the Japanese invasion of China there had been widespread public bitterness against the aggressor nation, and the "dishonourable intentions of the honourable little men from Tokyo" became one of the major bones of contention chewed upon by the Labour Party. Japan, however, was one of Australia's biggest trade customers, and the Government tried to remain on friendly terms. Organized labour favoured a policy of collective security and raged frequently and impotently against the shipments of scrap metal which went out so regularly from Australian ports bound for Kobe and Yokohama. The fault did not lie with Australia alone. Britain and the United States were also pursuing a policy of appeasement in the Far East. If this attitude were taken by the greatest Powers in the world, Australia—unable to defend herself again Japan single-handed—also had to fall into line.

Australia welcomed the stiffening of democratic opinion in 1940, when Tokyo formally joined the Axis. It had known for a decade of Britain's increasing preoccupation with events in

Europe; it had known that Australian national interests were no longer completely identical with those of the parent country. And so Australia was happy immediately to join the anti-Nippon coalition in the Pacific.

The Curtin Government took office exactly two months before Pearl Harbor. But from the very moment that Curtin became Prime Minister he set about preparing for the inevitable day of war in the Pacific. Military and diplomatic measures were decided upon at secret meetings of the cabinet. The "brains trust" for the job was Curtin and his Foreign Minister, Dr. Herbert Vere Evatt. These two men were to become the significant figures in the shaping of Australian policy.

Evatt immediately became the spokesman of Australia's "new international order" so far as it concerned the Pacific. He reported to Parliament a little of what had gone on behind locked doors in the Cabinet room at Canberra. Among his earlier announcements were notifications of (a) Australia's complete alliance with Soviet Russia and requests for a "firm and unbroken alliance between the Empire, U.S.S.R., and the U.S.A.," (b) the retention of American leadership and initiative on behalf of the democratic Powers in negotiations with Japan, and (c) Australia's refusal to ratify any further appeasement moves or any agreement Britain might make with Japan that might be detrimental to the interests of China. He made it clear also that Australia would consider itself on a footing of "absolute equality" with Great Britain on any missions or councils handling the military or political affairs of the Pacific.

Curtin and Evatt had made it reasonably clear to the world that Australia was quite prepared to go to war with Japan if further appeasement was the only alternative, and Australia's declaration of war on December 8 (December 7, Pearl Harbor time) did not come as a surprise. The method of voicing the declaration—without reference to the British Government, but simply by the submitting of the Declaration to King George—caused some wonderment in Downing Street and the British Parliament. For the first time in the history of the British Empire a dominion had made an independent declaration of war, and Australia not only proclaimed that a state of war existed with Japan, but also with Rumania, Hungary, and Finland. Australia was emphasizing its autonomy; giving notice to the world that it was a nation of independent decision, a nation entitled to equal partnership in the great struggle that was about to begin with Japan.

Except in Malaya, where Australia had two infantry brigades

of the Eighth Division, none of the outposts were equipped or manned to resist a strong attack. In Rabaul, garrisoned by little more than a battalion of troops, the puny "air striking force" of half a dozen Lockheed Hudson reconnaissance bombers and a few Catalina flying boats went out to meet the Japs, striking at the Mandated Islands with raids on Truk and Kapingamarangi. In Malaya the A.I.F. went to its prepared positions on the east coast of the peninsula as the Japanese landed at Kota Baru and succeeded in driving the Indian defenders back from the Thai border. The Australians, still manning the line along the northern frontier of Johore, watched the collapse of the northern defences, watched the steady withdrawal of the British and Indian troops, watched the gallant resistance of such magnificent British regiments as the Gordon Highlanders and the Argyll and Sutherlanders, still fighting fiercely although terribly outnumbered and cut to ribbons by enemy air attacks.

The Malayan campaign had gone well into its second month, before the Australians were given their first taste of action against the Japanese. One battalion went ahead of the main positions at Batu Anam in an attempt to ambush the enemy. The trap was set at the bridge spanning the Gamencheh River, already marked for demolition by engineers. On the afternoon of January 14, 1942, the Japanese advanced in force to cross the stream. Hundreds of Australians, hidden in the dense vegetation, watched them streaming down the road, packing across the bridge, laughing and singing. The bridge and both approaches were crowded with Japanese infantry when the order was given to make the attack. The bridge went sky-high in one gigantic blast. Australian machine guns, mortars, tommy-guns, and rifles poured devastating fire into the choked roads, which were soon piled high with hundreds of enemy dead. Japanese reinforcements came up on bicycles, fixed bayonets and attacked the Australian positions. They were met by one hundred men of an Australian infantry company who fought steel with steel. In a series of desperate bayonet duels the Australians proved masters. With cold steel and grenades they accounted for five hundred Japanese at the cost of only a few score Australian lives. Altogether the ambush had inflicted on the Japanese their first important defeat of the Malayan campaign. They had lost ten tanks and one thousand men killed.

The next clash came at Gemas, where the Japanese advanced behind a screen of fourteen tanks, four of them twenty-tonners, the other ten-ton light tanks. The Australian anti-tank gunners held their fire until the vehicles were only two hundred yards

away, destroyed four of the tanks and repelled the enemy's first thrust. The enemy pushed in hundreds more reinforcements. Once they were driven off, squealing like children, by an Australian bayonet attack, but they had the weight of numbers to come again and again. Moreover, Zero fighters and Mitsubishi dive-bombers were operating in swarms over and behind the Australian lines. Air attacks covered enemy infiltration behind the Australian posts and the weary Diggers had to fight their way out through the encircling enemy positions. Once they ran right into a strong Japanese force which was forming for an attack behind a screen of four light tanks. Again the Australians attacked with bayonets, killing 120 Japs and breaking right through the enemy lines in hand-to-hand fighting. The Japanese survivors ran. Three of the four tanks were destroyed.

Another Australian unit had been completely cut off by Japanese landings on the south bank of the Muar River. The Australians struggled through the jungle in an attempt to join up with the shattered remains of an Indian battalion. But the Japanese were filtering through behind them. Men fell, shot in the back, as they struggled through the tangled vines and creepers, bleeding from lacerations caused by innumerable thorns, stumbling along up to their waists in swamps. Victorians joined forces with men from New South Wales to launch an attack against the main Japanese positions. But, even as they attacked, another enemy force came in behind them with tanks and artillery. The fight was hopeless. Australia did not know it, nor did she know that all Malaya was doomed. Censorship was painting a very different picture.

The main British forces were many miles to the southward and in between was a whole division of the Japanese Imperial Guards. The men split up into small groups to fight their way to safety as best they could. Surrender had been rejected by every man when the suggestion was made formally by an officer. They decided to fight it out. There was little food, less ammunition. And the Australians, although they had been advised by their command that they could do so, refused to abandon their wounded.

For mile after mile they struggled forward, fighting heavy Japanese forces, losing man after man by fire from snipers who were in the trees on every side. Finally they reached a bridge which they had been told was still in British hands. It was surrounded by Japanese.

Australian parties massed and attempted to take the bridge at bayonet point. There were three hundred men against three thousand. They were hurled back with heavy casualties. Again

they split into small parties to fight their way through the jungles and rubber plantations. By this time there were few men who weren't injured in some way. The most seriously wounded were put into a truck and a volunteer driver charged the bridge at full speed in an attempt to break through to safety. The driver was killed by machine-gun fire, the truck overturned in a ditch, and every man died.

Medical supplies and food were dropped to some of the parties struggling southward. The average strength of each party was thirty men; the proportion of fitness was ten fit men to twenty wounded! At dawn each day every party was counted. Always there were fewer men alive than there had been the night before.

But neither enemy strength nor jungle and swamp could stop these men. Bearded, mud-stained, covered with blood, their uniforms ripped to tatters, the first of the survivors straggled into the British lines. Others followed. Within a few days more than a thousand men had reached safety. And in fighting their way through they had held up the advance of a full division of the Japanese Guards for a whole week. After a day's rest many of them were in the line fighting again.

The sorry campaign rushed headlong to its climax. One of the most deplorable chapters in British military history came to an end on February 15, when Singapore was formally surrendered to the enemy. In the last few days there were men who fought and there were men who tossed aside their weapons and went to the Singapore bars to have a last fling before death or imprisonment. The bulk of the Australians, reinforced by a battalion of Gordon Highlanders, held their line until the last, although both flanks had fallen to the enemy. When the "cease fire" order was given they marched back along the road they had followed, back to the bomb-torn shambles of Singapore . . . back into Japanese captivity.

Australian warships were heading southward with refugees. The remnants of the Royal Australian Air Force, which had tried desperately with its few slow Brewster Buffaloes and Lockheed Hudsons to give battle to the swarming locust plagues of Zeros and Mitsubishiis and Nakajimas, had got away. But the 18,000 men still alive out of the Australian Army of Malaya were behind the barbed wire of Japanese prison camps.

### III. AUSTRALIAN CRISIS

10

#### IT CAN HAPPEN HERE

THERE WAS DESPERATION IN THE WAY the men in khaki shorts slaved in the hot sunshine of Darwin, pushing a tangled labyrinth of barbed wire out into the shallow waters of the Arafura Sea, piling up ramparts of sandbags on the cliffs and sand dunes, digging tank traps and machine-gun pits amid the mangroves and ghost gums.

A sturdy youngster with the biceps of a Sandow and the colour of a Polynesian wearily shoved his spade into the sand and turned to his friend:

"How many of these bloody sandbags do you think we've filled, Toby?" he asked.

"Christ! Why ask me?" snarled Toby. "I can only count up to a bloody million!"

On the new roads tractors and bulldozers thundered, dimly seen in the constant clouds of dust. An engineer corporal spat out a mouthful of red dust and sighed.

"I enlisted to fight for my damned country, not to eat it," he groaned.

None of us who had been in Darwin had much doubt that the Japs would come. The spearhead of their advance was driving down through the Dutch East Indies. All of us remembered little incidents that had occurred before Pearl Harbor. There was the time when the Japanese naval training ship put into Darwin. A party of officers were touring the squalid little town area in an automobile. They drove along a military road into Darwin's most secret defence area. The guard stepped out with levelled rifle and halted the car.

"I am sorry, gentlemen," he said, courteously but firmly. "This is a defence area. You will have to turn back."

The Japanese lieutenant commander who had stepped out of the automobile bowed stiffly from the waist.

"The insult is forgiven," he said coldly. "It is not forgotten."

It was not long afterwards that two seamen from a Japanese lugger were found in the heart of the same defence area. The

Leica cameras which they carried were seized, the films confiscated. When they were developed they contained pictures of types of barbed-wire defences, weapon pits, tank traps, and gun emplacements.

These were trivial little details in the broad picture of the war as a whole, but it was simply because of years of careful attention to such military trivia that Japan was now overrunning the whole Western Pacific with a systematic inexorability that was frightening.

On February 17 bombs fell on Australian soil. The Japanese, apparently using the same air and naval task force that had shattered and conquered Rabaul a month before, swooped down on Darwin with a plague of fighters, dive-bombers, and high-level bombers. The harbour was crowded with ships, some of them American. There was virtually no air defence. Japan, with the same monopoly of the air that had won the Malayan campaign, struck with scores of planes at a concentrated target area which suffered, proportionately, a hammering as severe as London had ever received in the great blitz. Ships were sunk—one of them, the United States destroyer *Peary*, went down heroically with her anti-aircraft guns still in action even as the harbour waters were closing over her shattered decks. The four-million-dollar Australian air base was almost completely wiped out. Most of the town was razed. Hundreds were killed, hundreds more wounded. A great stream of refugees began to stream southward to the cities outside the danger area.

In ninety minutes the whole character of Australia's role in the war had changed. It was now a fight for self-preservation.

Rabaul, Australia's most northerly garrison in the New Guinea area, had been overwhelmed by the Japanese on January 23 after every major town in the maze of tropical islands had been hammered by droves of aircraft. To meet the 20,000 troops, twenty warships, and 250 aircraft that Japan had hurled against Rabaul, Australia had a mere 1,400 men, five obsolete training planes, two six-inch guns (blown out of existence by preliminary air bombardment before they had fired a shot!), and two anti-aircraft guns. The garrison was conquered after a three-hour battle, but the Australians killed more than 2,000 Japanese before they retreated into the jungle and abandoned to Japan what was later proved the most valuable strategic prize of the South Pacific war.

Port Moresby, last remaining stronghold of the north-eastern defences, the last bastion protecting the fertile eastern seaboard of Australia, with its great cities and industries, had been bombed



and bombed again. It, too, had insufficient defences to counter even moderate bombing, to say nothing of large-scale attack.

Much of Australian defence had been staked on the alleged impregnability of Singapore, and that fortress had fallen almost without a fight.

It would be ridiculous to suggest that Australia's reaction to this sudden and alarming change in her position was anything but pessimistic. Everything had happened so suddenly. Australia had the feeling that it would have to solve its own problems—Churchill had given a grim and solemn warning that commitments of the United Nations were so rigid that no tangible aid could be given "for some time" to nations meeting the new menace in the Pacific. Curtin had already appealed to America to come to the assistance of a nation that was fighting desperately against the enemy that had shattered Pearl Harbor, but it would take time for American aid to be felt. And America herself was up to her neck in commitments to her own defence and replacements, promises to China, to Britain, to Africa, to Russia, to India.

With 20,000 more young Australians added to the war casualty lists, a wave of bitterness swept Australia. The people, unaware of secret movements of men and supplies, only aware of their own mounting peril and that Australia had sent its men and materials to help the world and now could expect no help from the world when Australia was endangered, looked for someone to blame. Mostly they blamed Britain. In that month of February, 1942, morale was low, fear was growing, and the people were growing more and more dissatisfied with a censorship that was denying them the right to face facts squarely. They were angry, too, that the world refused to wake up to the shoulder-shrugging complacency of "too little, too late" policies that were shaping Pacific defence. In the minds of many a fear was forming—a fear that Japan really *was* invincible. Thousands of middle-aged men who had fought in the last war rushed to the Volunteer Defence Corps (Australia's Home Guard) to study guerrilla warfare and to drill with dummy wooden rifles. In almost every home householders were digging slit trenches and air-raid shelters. These were the same people who, six months before, had smugly said, "It can't happen here!"

Army authorities were adding final details to a plan for a scorched earth policy which would apply to 1,000,000 square miles of Australia, and which would abandon to the enemy the northern one-third of the continent.

"Britain let us down!" was a common accusation in the streets

of every town and city. Nobody bothered to wonder what Britain could have done at that late stage to stem the overwhelming Japanese tide that was pouring southward through the island maze. But Britain was to remain the scapegoat . . . until the A.I.F. returned. These men corrected misconceptions quickly. They had fought shoulder to shoulder with the British Tommy. They had seen the humble London householder standing up to the fury of the blitz. They had been able to escape from Greece only because of the iron resolution of the British armoured brigade that fought the rearguard action until it was almost annihilated. They had seen the magnificent work of the Royal Navy. The wave of anti-British sentiment that had surged through the Empire's refractory dominion was stilled.

The fear that swept Australia was no hysterical panic brought about by the fact that Australia herself was for the first time in danger. The peril was very real. Now, more than a year later, it is possible to look back and wonder why Japan did not push ahead. The answer probably lies in the fact that Australia's defence was not its strength in guns and tanks and planes and trained fighting men, but in its geography—in its deserts and arid, stunted woods; in its swamps and mountains and jungles. But those desolate areas were also areas that the Japanese could have employed for landing points and beachheads upon which to build a military machine for the subjugation of the continent.

Japan did not push ahead for the same reason that Germany failed to "cash in" after Dunkirk, for the same reason that Pearl Harbor was not followed up—because enemy strategy was not broad enough to take advantage of the initial gains.

It would seem, looking at the thing in retrospect, that Japan worked out a careful timetable of conquest based on its own known strength and on expected opposition. The first section of the plan worked like an express train schedule. After that the train bolted. The United Nations collapsed where the Japanese had expected them to stand firmly, and the attacking machine thundered headlong beyond the point to which planned strategies had taken it. Japan had to halt because its pattern of conquest had been created too swiftly. It had to halt to think out the next move. And, instead of going ahead with its policy of bold, aggressive hammer-blows, it suddenly became cautious. The Japs, sated with success, for the first time began to show a measure of timidity about what was ahead of them. For the first time they refused to gamble on the element of surprise and the swift strokes that had given the world a new conception of amphibious warfare.

In two months the Japanese had proved that their *Blitzkrieg*—Nippon's *den giki sen* (lightning attack battle)—could accomplish as much on the seas and in the jungles of the tropics as Hitler's steel monsters had accomplished on the plains of France and Belgium.

They never knew that there was almost nothing ahead of them to stand in the way of further conquest. They could have pressed on and taken Darwin. They could have assaulted and conquered every island base in the New Guinea archipelago in less than a week. They could have commanded the Pacific seaways and had the entire continent of Australia almost at their mercy. Australia and the United Nations can thank Providence to-day that the men behind the *den giki sen*, the men running the terrible war machine that had got away from them, were not prepared to take the risk.

But nobody in Australia at that time knew that the Japanese, for at least enough time to give the desperately-needed breathing space, had outrun themselves. It was hard then to find silver linings to the dark clouds of war.

The whole of the Indonesian world was collapsing in the dark, final days of Java. Timor, the nearest foreign island to Australian shores, had become a battlefield. A tiny Australian garrison was fighting vainly with the Dutch to hold the naval base at Ambon. Dutch, American, British, and Australian warships were trying to fight through the great naval cordon that Japan had thrown around the island of Java. Britain's cruiser *Exeter*, conqueror of the *Graf Spee* in the now-forgotten Battle of the River Plate, had gone to the bottom in the Battle of the Java Sea. America's *Houston* had been sent to the bottom with her guns still blazing. Australia's light cruiser *Perth*, which had fought so valiantly in the Mediterranean running convoys to besieged Malta and fighting her way through swarms of dive-bombers in the ghastly actions off Crete, had gone down, apparently with all hands. And the tiny little Australian sloop *Tarra*, only half the size of a destroyer, had been blown to pieces while running the gauntlet to the great line of Japanese warships in a vain attempt to lay a smoke screen so that the bigger and more valuable ships—Australian, British, Dutch, and American—could escape.

Those were days of tragedy and sacrifice. And the Australian newspapers were carrying whole pages of war casualty lists as the grim month of February gave way to an anxious March.

## BLACK MONTH

UP UNTIL THIS TIME, Australia had known few of the periods of tragedy and fear and misery that at some time or other beset almost any country. In the more than a century and a half of her history she had known no conflict on her own soil greater than the clash of gold-miners and police during the great Ballarat "rush" of decades ago, when the miners entrenched themselves for a few hours behind the palisades of the Eureka Stockade and defied authority. It had never seen anything comparable to the battles that had ravaged Europe, to the ghastly civil wars of America and Spain, to the bloodshed and famine of East Asia.

Perhaps, when this war is over, March of 1942 will go down in Australian history as the blackest month in the country's life. In cities that had never known the fear of attack, all lights were out, strips of adhesive tape had been stuck to the windows of almost every shop, each house had its air-raid shelter or trench, women and children were being evacuated from the northernmost towns and cities. The Japanese threat, of which Australia had talked for forty long years, had suddenly become very real.

Not only Australia but all the world had a wholesome respect for the Japanese war machine, and Tokyo Radio's clamourings about "decadent democracy" were beginning to sow seeds of doubt in the minds of many. Talk of Japanese invincibility was regarded as more than a piece of spirit-bolstering Oriental propaganda.

Into the great maw of Nippon had gone a whole Empire in less than three months. The unbelievable riches of the Dutch East Indies had been swallowed. All of the Malayan Archipelago had gone. Half the strategic islands of the Western Pacific were under the Japanese flag. And all of the northern coast of Australia was opposed by a fence of steel—Japanese steel.

Against the inexorable pressure of the enemy a few thousand grim-faced Australians—youngsters of the home defence militia, who had never seen war, who had scarcely enough equipment with which to fight a war—stood guard with set lips and white faces. They stood at both gateways to the continent—at Darwin in the north-west to meet any threat from Java and Timor; at Port Moresby in the north-east, to counter the growing enemy concentrations coming down from Truk to Rabaul. Only senior

officers knew that both garrisons were supposed to fight the final delaying action, were meant to hold out for a few hours before they were submerged in what was thought would be an overwhelming tide. But the men didn't have to be told. They sensed that their role would be largely sacrificial. There was nothing they could do about it.

At that time I was in Port Moresby, later to prove the most vital base in all the South Pacific. It was held then by 3,000 combat troops. Its defence against air attack consisted of five anti-aircraft guns. Its air support was half a dozen reconnaissance planes, the fastest of which could attain a speed of 220 miles an hour, against the 350 miles an hour of the Zero. There weren't enough military trucks to go round. In the jungle twenty-five miles away were vast dumps of supplies and ammunition. One mud-caked road led to the dumps. That road was to be our line of retreat when the Japs came. We would be expected to hold out in the town for thirty-six hours, and then go back into the jungle to fight a guerrilla action until . . . well, until we could fight no longer, or until help came.

That was the black month. Just how black the position for Australia was can be appreciated by the fact that Port Moresby was even then regarded as the Achilles' heel of Australian defence. On March 8 the Japanese moved south again. They did not come to Moresby, thus committing one of their cardinal strategical mistakes—one of the mistakes that they must soon realize have cost them the war. They went instead to Lae and Salamaua.

It was on March 17, with the position still full of tension, that we gathered around a battered radio set in the grass hut and listened to the sensational announcement that spat through the static:

"General Douglas MacArthur, American commander of the heroic defence force in the Philippines, has arrived in Australia. He has been smuggled out of Corregidor by PT boats of the United States Navy and by special aircraft in one of the most dramatic episodes of the war. It is expected that General MacArthur will confer immediately with the Prime Minister, Mr. Curtin, after which he will take supreme command of all forces in the Australian theatre."

In New Guinea excitement spread almost as rapidly as conjecture. In Australia the whole country went mad. It is impossible now to recapture the drama of that moment. Australian morale, which had been lower than at any time since the war began, suddenly boomed to an all-time high. Australians could scarcely believe that MacArthur, with a reputation as a soldier almost

incredibly high by the standards of United Nations generalship, had been allotted to a theatre of war which had previously been the Cinderella of battle zones. Public opinion, which had been bitter, even defeatist to some extent, suddenly and spectacularly leaped to the opposite extreme. Suggestions that America was to pour all her might of arms into Australia to make the island continent the great marshalling point for the Pacific counter-offensive under MacArthur, swept the land from end to end.

"The Japs will soon be licked. . . . MacArthur will fix things. . . . They say that all the United States Army is starting the march back to Tokyo from here . . . a million Americans are on their way across the Pacific . . . the Japs are preparing to abandon Java without a fight. . . ."

Those phrases were actually said to me in that month of March —quoted to me as facts. One would have thought that MacArthur was Superman, capable of licking the whole Japanese Empire singlehanded! It was a fantastic reaction, but it clearly showed the importance of MacArthur's arrival to home-front morale. In one Australian public hospital eleven baby boys were born on that night of March 17. Every one of the eleven now carries the name "Douglas MacArthur" before his surname.

The people could be told about the arrival of MacArthur. They could not be told of an event of equal or greater importance, an event that was to turn the whole tide of conflict in the islands north of Australia.

Across the South Pacific, on a great circle course that took it far south of the estimated range of Japanese submarines and aircraft, steamed a vast convoy, an armada of merchantmen and passenger ships, of tankers and freighters. The ships were laden to the Plimsolls with planes and bombs and guns and shells, every cabin and every passenger deck filled with men of the United States Army and Air Force. The first great shipment of American supply to Australia was on its way to the beleaguered continent.

And then, while Australian confidence and spirit and morale flowed back with increasing swiftness, there came a sight to stir the heart of every Australian. Through the city streets was heard the pulsing music of military bands, the rhythmic *crunch, crunch, crunch* of thousands of heavy boots. Swinging along in columns of three, marched the veterans of the Australian Imperial Force, slouch hats set rakishly above hard-bitten faces browned and weathered by two years of desert sun and flying sand, the bayonets that had been used in Libya and Greece and Crete and Syria flashing in the cool autumn sunshine, hat-bands and gaiters and web belts gleaming white. Many did not come back, but as those

who did marched through the streets and through the hail of streamers and confetti, there were tears in thousands of eyes that were tears, not of sorrow, but of gratitude and pride. Thousands of the best fighting men that Australia had ever produced were home again—to fight, this time, for their homeland.

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### AUSTRALIAN ARSENAL

THE FIRST HOSTILE RAID ON Australian soil came twenty-nine months after the outbreak of war. At a time when there was not much to be thankful for, Australia had one great cause for gratitude—the fact that in that time Australia had progressed from an agricultural country to a land of enormous industrial output. Had Japan struck a year earlier the position would have been vastly different, but the final breathing space had given Australian industries time to pass from the period of establishment and tooling-up to the period of outright mass production.

Lathes were whirring and presses thundering in scores of mighty factories. Australia's great steel mills were turning out the raw metal for hundreds of different wartime products. The great deposits of iron ore were being worked to the capacity of all the manpower available. All that Australia needed to become a mighty industrial country was oil—and this was coming across the Pacific in millions of gallons from California and Texas.

The final stage in the renaissance of a continent had been reached almost overnight when Pearl Harbor brought war to the Pacific. Within a few hours of the Hawaiian bombings total mobilization had been achieved in Australia. Two hundred thousand militia soldiers who had been on a factory-camp rotation went into the armed forces for the duration, and many new militia classes were drafted. In every Australian city practically all deliveries of commodities to private homes were immediately cut out. A third of all aircraft factory workers were replaced by women, and thousands of other women in twenty different classes were drafted to release soldiers for combat duty. Private motoring ceased almost completely under the tightened gasoline rationing. The record \$1,000,000,000 war budget was boosted by another \$80,000,000, and \$510 incomes were brought into the taxation field for the first time.

In the new national emergency Curtin called for stepped-up

production in all munitions factories. Long-laid plans went into effect to duplicate at secret sites far inland certain of the vulnerable key industries on the coastal fringe of the continent. Increased aircraft production was given first place among production aims. All material and labour priorities were changed to bring maximum output to existing plane factories and to establish new plants. In thousands of factories throughout the land workers were holding meetings to see how they could speed production—pledging “gifts of working hours.”

It was about this time that Hallett Abend, the American writer, visited Australia. “Australia’s strength or weakness has suddenly become a matter of vital concern to the United States,” he wrote. “And it is strength, not weakness. Just returned from Down Under, I am still stunned by the spectacle of a country that has genuinely gone ‘all out.’ Australia’s war effort is prodigious.”

By the end of January the Government had introduced one of the most sweeping measures ever taken by an Allied country at war. It announced that all non-essential industry would be closed down, all plants possible would be converted to war production and employees drafted either into the fighting services or into war factories. The limited population of Australia had swiftly brought about the inevitable acute shortage of manpower. When harvesting leave for militia soldiers mobilized for war service was cancelled, it was at the expense of losing part of the wheat crop. Aliens and refugees from Axis-dominated countries were given the terse alternative—volunteer for one of the armed forces or be drafted into a labour corps. One of the Germans who volunteered immediately for the A.I.F. had been wounded by Australians at Villers-Bretonneux in 1918. “This time,” he said, “I hope to be at the right end of an Australian gun!”

Australians of the last war, too old for active overseas duty, volunteered in thousands for the “People’s Army” to fight as guerrillas if such a course became necessary, to accept literally and enthusiastically Curtin’s declaration, “We will fight in every town and city. Every village will become a fortress in a last-ditch fight!”

On the walls of Australian towns and villages a new slogan was chalked: “WORK, FIGHT OR PERISH!” Drovers and farmers began one of the greatest stock migrations in history, taking more than a million head of the country’s dairy cattle westward over the mountains away from the vulnerable coastal regions. Milk supplies for the cities were interrupted—but this was a national emergency.

Every aspect of Australian life felt the sharp pruning-knife of



austerity living. Jewellers were permitted to continue making wedding rings, but were prevented from manufacturing engagement rings. Six hundred articles previously manufactured in Australia, from washing machines to vacuum cleaners, were placed on the banned list. No more would be made until the war was over.

Prices and wages were frozen, absenteeism placed under severe penalty, trading in stocks, land, and property prohibited; workers were told that in the future they would not be allowed to quit their jobs, for any reason, without Government approval; employers were warned that they were no longer entitled to discharge a worker from his employment without first referring the matter to the Government. All profits were limited to 4 per cent. on gross capital. Men were withdrawn from 3,000 banks, either by closing down competing branches or by working arrangements agreed upon between office staffs. Occupations previously regarded as "exempt from military service" were combed and recombined to get more men for the colours. Curtin introduced plans also to absorb another 60,000 men and 40,000 women into war industries.

Australian industrial output was still the principal consideration. Adequate supplies could not come from Britain—Australia, even at this time of crisis, was still shipping thousands of tons of war materials to Great Britain, India, and Africa. With the exception of aircraft, the supply of war material from the United States was still a mere trickle.

Fortunately the country had a good basis on which to build the great machine that would turn out the weapons of war. Her vast coal reserves were equivalent to the world's total production for the next fifty years. At Newcastle she had the biggest single steel plant in the British Empire and the world's most comprehensive handling alloys of steel. The great blast furnaces of the Broken Hill Company, which had in peacetime consumed annually more than 1,000,000 tons of iron ore, had stepped up production to an unbelievable degree. Tremendous quantities of iron ore were coming out of Whyalla and Port Kembla. Copper refineries were working twenty-four hours a day, every day.

Thousands of workers were slaving on the great silver-lead ore bodies at Broken Hill, hundreds of miles inland—in the romantic and picturesque mining settlement where, sixty years before, a group of men had played a historic game of euchre to sell shares in the deposit for \$480, shares which had eventually increased in value to \$16,000,000!

By March the civilian population's living standard had shrunk

to the stark subsistence level of which Curtin had warned the people of Australia within a few hours after Pearl Harbor. No restaurant or hotel in Australia—no matter how opulent—was permitted to serve a meal of more than three courses; nor were they allowed to charge more than fifty cents for breakfast, sixty-five cents for luncheon, eighty cents for dinner. In a country that produced more and better wool than any other land on earth, clothing rationing became so severe that if a man bought himself a suit of clothes, two shirts, some shoes, a topcoat, and a hat, he would be able to buy no other apparel for a whole year! Evening wear for men and women was banned entirely. Double-breasted suits were banned; and the laces, trimmings, and frills on women's frocks were made illegal by special regulations.

The revolution in the nation's civilian industry swept the land from end to end. The national way of life was rapidly reaching a stage, anyway, where there was not much left to do except work for war. Gasoline for private motoring was cut by more than 90 per cent., and the monthly dribble that the Government allowed existed only because the authorities wished to keep every car in Australia in working condition in case of a national emergency. Beer production and the sale of spirits were cut by more than 30 per cent.; cigarettes by a quarter.

Corset manufacturers switched to production of machine-gun covers and anti-gas capes. Firms that made beach jackets were ordered to make flying suits. Factory girls who had been making such banned cosmetics as lipsticks and powders and nail lacquer learned how to use riveting machines. Carpenters who had been manufacturing cocktail cabinets and bookcases were sent into the arid northern plains to help build hangars for B17s at new airfields which were being carved out of the dusty scrub.

Within three months of Pearl Harbor Australia had changed more than 400,000 men and women from civilian production to war work—a diversion of manpower equivalent, on a basis of population ratio, to a switch-over of more than 8,000,000 Americans.

What was the result? Australia had become an arsenal. We had begun the war with 5,000 workers in war factories. By March of 1942 we had more than 600,000. Steel production had almost doubled. Light whole-track machine-gun carriers were being turned out by the thousands, and production had begun on heavy tanks for the first time. Aircraft factories were turning out trainers, army co-operation planes, and medium bombers in hundreds each month, and production had begun on a new type of Australian-made bomber and a new pursuit plane—and for the first

time Australia was manufacturing the engines also. Assembly lines were pouring out an endless stream of machine guns of five types (including the splendid Australian-invented Owen sub-machine gun), mortars, heavy and light anti-aircraft guns, anti-tank guns, field artillery, searchlights and optical equipment, and tremendous quantities of bombs, shells, and ammunition. The manufacture of rifles had increased by 7,000 per cent.

At the outbreak of war Australia had built no ships of any sort for a quarter of a century. Now great yards were in full swing all around the coast. Big *Tribal* class destroyers were being built; some had already gone into active service. Fifty minesweepers and dozens of fine sloops and corvettes had gone down the ways. Hospital ships had been created, armed merchantmen fitted out. And the first of sixty 9,000-ton freighters had already gone into convoy service.

The screws were tightened once again on manpower. Lawn-mower factories took in defence contracts. Jewellers were given work in war plants drilling superfine jets for bunsen burners, for which neither the drills nor the skilled workmen had previously been available. Carpet manufacturers devoted their looms to the newly-developed flax industry and made hammocks for the Navy. . . .

Curtin took time off to tell Australia what he meant by his "Work or Fight Régime."

"It means that every human being in Australia whether he or she likes it or not, is at the service of the Government for the defence of Australia. It also means that all machinery, money, buildings, and plants, when required, may be diverted to war purposes at the direction of the Government. Enemy power rests on a totalitarian basis, and this country must use everything in resistance to him. I will not go into post-mortems as to how this thing happened, and I will not allow you to engage in disputation as to whether this thing or that thing has been done rightly or wrongly six days, six months, or six years ago. The chapter of controversy is ended in Australia. Only two things stand between us and the overthrow of everything we have and hope to have. These are the heroism and fighting power of the men going to battle, and the industry, zeal and devotion of the men left behind.

"We have reached the stage where a new way of life is impelled upon us. All your leisure must now be devoted to the service of your fellow man. When you go forth to war you go to defend your life, because Japan does not hoist its flag in any territories it

occupies unless it first destroys the lives of all who would resist it. We are seven million people occupying the largest continental island on earth. We have tamed this country, gone into its vast spaces and filled it with courageous men and women. From the day of its foundation this country has been governed by the men and women of our race, and we do not intend that this shall be destroyed because an enemy marches against us.

“Adversity has never cowed you, overwhelming odds have never intimidated you, and to-day I call on you to invoke all the best qualities of your ancestry to go forth to your workshop and factory, to work there as long as you can stand. . . .”

## IV. MEN WITH RESPONSIBILITY

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### NATION'S LEADER

AFTER THE EASING OF THE desperate period when Australia was under distinct threat of a Japanese invasion, a Sydney newspaper—never a supporter of Labour—used the phrase, "Thank God we had Curtin." That phrase reflected the general opinion of Australia toward its Prime Minister, the "little man" who surprised them by becoming not only Australia's great discovery among statesmen, but probably one of the most outstanding leaders in the country's history.

Even Curtin's most intimate friends were amazed at the metamorphosis of a "nice little feller" into a nation's stern, steel-fisted Man of Destiny. He had been regarded as a scrupulously honest and sane-thinking Labour "boss," a reticent and rather timid man notable for party loyalty more than leadership, a man who preferred his quiet and humble family life to all the pomp and panoply of fame. As a politician he had remarkable powers of oratory and a capacity for clear thinking astonishing in a man who had been forced by poverty to leave school at the age of twelve to earn his living as a printer's devil. But as a politician he was regarded as too honest, too self-effacing to be much more than a loyal party hack.

Nobody could have guessed that Curtin would become the toughest politician in Australia; the first man to speak up bluntly to Whitehall; the first man to tell the British "home Government" frankly to quit being so condescending. He never pulled his punches when he had something to say.

Before Singapore fell he bitterly condemned the attitude of philosophic acceptance adopted by many of the British war leaders and some of the American. He pointed out that they were philosophical about the suggestion that Singapore might not, after all, be impregnable. "There are times when I prefer even hysterical people to philosophical people. The hysterical people might at least accidentally toss us a gun!"

But he didn't get hysterical when Singapore did fall. "The fall of Singapore is Australia's Dunkirk," he said, solemnly and

truthfully. "Our honeymoon is finished. It is now work or fight—and work or fight as we have never worked or fought before."

At a time when, as one American newspaperman said, "everybody seems anxious to get the Aussies to come help them, but nobody appears anxious to go help the Aussies," Curtin was attacked by political opponents clamouring for "offensives."

"I am not going to make our fighting men mere suicide squads to satisfy talkative armchair strategists," he snapped.

Curtin is a fine enough orator to have been dubbed "Mr. Winston Roosevelt Curtin" by more than one commentator. But it's impossible for anyone to line up the plain-living, plain-spoken Australian of humble origin with the two smooth, cultured, wealthy, political aristocrats of Pennsylvania Avenue and Downing Street. The only thing Curtin has in common with either of them is that, like Churchill, he is a former newspaperman. He still carries the membership card and badge of his newspaper guild.

Curtin was born of poor parents in the little country town of Creswick, not far from the famous Ballarat gold diggings in the State of Victoria, fifty-eight years ago. He was the first of four children of the local policeman. At the age of twelve, young Jack had to get out and work. He became a printer's devil in a shop in Melbourne that turned out a small magazine. In his spare time the youngster learned to play football well enough to become a leading player in the major professional league. It was at a football game that he met some of Australia's most militant "Labourites" and Socialists. He read and studied during every spare moment as he worked, first in the printer's shop, later as a potter's hand, and then as a labourer in a can factory.

By 1911, when he had become an active Leftist, he took the job of Secretary of the Timberworkers' Union, and three years later tried to break into politics. He tacked a strong Conservative seat and was defeated, but he was not disgraced. He polled more Labour votes than any man had ever polled before—or has ever polled since—in that constituency.

It is strange now to link up Curtin, great total war protagonist of the Second World War, with Curtin, the violent anti-conscriptionist of the last war. But from 1915 to 1917 Curtin campaigned the length of the continent, vehemently denouncing conscription for war. By the time of the armistice he had been married, had settled in Western Australia and had become editor of a weekly Labour newspaper. In 1928 he at last broke into

politics, winning a seat in the Federal House. The great industrial depression wrecked the Labour Government, and Curtin lost the election of 1931. He fought back three years later and was again elected. He has represented his electorate ever since, although in that notoriously uncertain seat he has had many narrow escapes. In 1935 he became leader of the Federal Labour Party and leader of the Federal Opposition. In 1940, after Dunkirk, everyone was campaigning for a National Government—a coalition of the Conservative, Labour, and Rural parties. Curtin refused, although he was certain of appointment as a Cabinet Minister, because he claimed that in war as well as peace there should be a party in opposition, free to criticize the administration. He suggested instead an Advisory War Council, made up of the senior members of all parties. This was agreed to, and is still in existence.

Curtin opposed the Government only when he was convinced that it was necessary. Generally he gave splendid co-operation to his political enemies. His fair-mindedness made him the logical choice for leader of a new Government when the Fadden régime collapsed. In fact all Australia turned to Jack Curtin as the national leader with an enthusiasm and trust which no other leader of the last two decades had been able to inspire; which no one two years before would have expected Curtin to inspire.

He knew better than any other man the toughness of the task ahead of him. His administration had many troubles. It had to stand up to fierce criticism and frequently its policies had to be modified as a result of that criticism. But through it all Curtin's reputation grew.

On some points he would not concede an inch of ground. His military knowledge, for a man who had never seen war, who had only once, and that briefly, been outside his own country, was quite astonishing. His foresight was sound and hindsight never occurred to him. People listened when he spoke of military things. They still remembered statements he had made years before. In 1937, with a vision remarkable even at that late juncture in the downhill race toward war, Curtin had gambled his party's chances of winning an election by sponsoring a programme calling for 10,000 aircraft instead of costly warships for his country's defence. People then said his scheme was fantastic. By the time the political prophet had become Prime Minister there was ample evidence that if Curtin's plan had been followed the whole course of the war might have been altered.

With war simmering in the Pacific, Curtin settled down in the hot summer of 1941 to work out the destiny of the country he

loved. He saw practically nothing of his wife and two children. He worked in his shirt sleeves, seven days a week, almost from dawn to dusk, and often far into the night. He did not court personal publicity, because he did not like it.

He knew the sacrifices his sparsely-populated land had made to the cause of the United Nations, and he felt that Australia should not be a mere puppet dancing before the backcloth of Allied grand strategies, dancing to the strings pulled by people thousands of miles away who could not be expected to appreciate Australia's own involved problems.

"No nation can afford to submerge the right of speaking for itself because of another nation's assumed omniscience," he announced calmly. And just as calmly he set about making Empire history in a manner and at a speed that the United States has not yet fully appreciated.

His first task was to gain for Australia a voice in the councils of the United Nations, in so far as Pacific war policy was determined. At a time when there was no precedent for a dominion's "making demands" on Britain—and, also, indirectly on the United States—Curtin thought nothing of establishing the precedent. Demanding an Australian voice in general strategic planning of the war in the Pacific, Curtin said that Australia flatly refused to accept the dictum that the Pacific war was a subordinate segment of the general conflict.

"I will make it clear," he said in the now famous statement that lifted every eyebrow in Whitehall, "that Australia looks to America free from any pangs about our traditional links of friendship with Britain. . . . We know that Australia could go under and Britain could still hold on. . . . We are determined that Australia shall not go. We shall exert our energy towards shaping a plan with the United States as its keystone, giving our country confidence and ability to hold out until the tide of battle swings against the enemy."

Later, when the position became even more desperate with the fall of Singapore and the Nipponese penetration of the Dutch East Indies, Curtin brought down for his countrymen the harshest "laws for living" Australia had ever known. But the things that happened without public announcement were more spectacular and more significant. Under Curtin's régime, Australia had marched independently into world diplomacy and had assumed a radically different attitude to Britain and to the rest of the British Commonwealth of Nations. Independent of Britain's wishes, Australia framed her own policies towards Soviet Russia, towards China, and towards all the subject peoples of Asia,



including India. These policies declared that Australia believed that the subject peoples of Asia should have the right of choosing their own forms of government, regardless of Western interests, and should be given the right to work out their own destinies.

It was because of Australian, not British, demands that the naval force of Singapore was strengthened. It was predominantly the Australian Government that remained adamant regarding its policy of "no appeasement to Japan that will be detrimental either to China or Soviet Russia." One of the strongest objectors to the Kurusu plan, seventeen days before Pearl Harbor, was Australia. That plan was a Japanese offer to withdraw her forces from French Indo-China if she were allowed complete freedom of action for military moves against the U.S.S.R. or China.

Curtin was not concerned alone with foreign relationships. His most pressing problem was the defence of his own land, towards which the tentacles of the Japanese octopus were swiftly reaching out. He requested the return to Australia of some at least of the Australian divisions attached to the British armies in the Middle East. Curtin was firm in his request, and it is not yet clear whether the British were willing or reluctant to part with an army that had given them such magnificent service in numerous difficult campaigns. But the bulk of the A.I.F. came home.

Curtin had good troops coming back. With his new alignment with the United States, he anticipated a steady stream of supplies from the great democracy on the opposite side of the Pacific. And, when the foundations first began to topple in the Pacific, he had made plans to obtain his supreme fighting commander. On February 15, the day that Singapore surrendered, Curtin made his secret proposal for General MacArthur to be smuggled out of the Philippines and brought to Australia for what was then believed to be the beginning of a great United Nations counter-offensive which would be built up and launched from the Australian springboard. Washington signified immediate agreement, Whitehall gave final endorsement of the plan a week later. In less than a month MacArthur was in Australia. Java had been overrun. Burma was being surely conquered by the Japanese hordes. The enemy was probing through the islands within bombing range of the Australian mainland. The curtain had gone up on the Battle for Australia.

Said John Curtin: "Whatever America does in the Pacific War is America's affair, but I do point out that the Battle for America may very well be won or lost by the way the Battle for Australia goes. Americans can and will save America if Australia is saved. . . . Anzac-American air power can save Australia and, by that,

immensely strengthen America's position, not only in the Pacific, but in the Atlantic, too."

14

## FOREIGN COMMANDER

LATE IN OCTOBER OF 1942, General Douglas MacArthur transferred his headquarters from Australia to Port Moresby. Word of his coming had spread by grapevine telegraph around the town and up into the mountains where tattered, hungry Australians were fighting desperately to drive back the spearhead of General Horii's Buna invasion force. For a while the men stopped discussing the all-important fact that the "wet" was coming in early and talked about their legendary commander whose name has the same remote magic for his troops that it does for the people of two continents. They were curious to see him.

And then MacArthur came, with a fleet of bombers and a top cover of P38s arrowheading through the overcast. As his plane bumped to a halt on the rough Port Moresby landing strip, the General stepped out, wearing his cap with the festoons of gold braid, but without his glittering chestful of medals. Infantrymen lined the airfield and the roadway down which he drove with an escort of armoured cars. Looking fit and grim, he drove straight to the headquarters which had been prepared for him and disappeared inside.

The headquarters was a little white bungalow, newly painted, with the luxury of a septic tank system and wide verandas looking out on a lovely garden of pink frangipani and scarlet poinciana. It was staffed by native servants in white, skirt-like *ramis* embellished with red stripes and blue stars. It carried the name that MacArthur has given to every place he has made his headquarters—"Bataan."

From this little bungalow General MacArthur seldom emerged. He left it to his subordinate commanders to get around among the troops, to survey the terrain and to investigate Japanese positions. The Commander-in-Chief of the South-west Pacific stayed inside, with his staff, and directed the New Guinea campaign—one of the most successful ever carried out in such difficult terrain with such paralysing problems of supply.

MacArthur has had hero-worship and publicity such as is given to few generals. Yet he remains probably the greatest military enigma of the war. He is a warrior straight out of medieval times, with conceptions of warfare at least as modern as those of any

other soldier living. A man flamboyant in his speech and his writings, with an incredible veneer of showmanship, who is at the same time a recluse, a hermit seldom seen even by his troops, a man so remote that he is almost a mystical figure. A man who became a world hero because he was in command of an army that was defeated. It is true that the defeat was a glorious one from the standpoint of American arms, but generally the people who set up idols remember the defeat and not the glory that preceded that defeat. Not so with MacArthur.

To attempt to evaluate this mystery man it is necessary to see him against the background of the theatre in which he has been commanding general since March of last year. When MacArthur was brought out of the Philippines at the request of the Australian Government, that country was facing its days of darkest peril. The Japanese, unbeatable everywhere, were spreading their tentacles southward rapidly. Because of commitments to distant battlefields, the country was drained, not only of trained men, but of equipment. Some units were drilling with wooden guns. Australia was faced with the appalling prospect of fixing a main defence line along the Tropic of Capricorn, just north of Brisbane, and abandoning, if necessary, the northern third of the continent to the Japanese invaders. North of the "Brisbane Line" there would be merely holding garrisons—burnt offerings. There was talk of retreating down the strategic Darwin road, to battle headquarters at Alice Springs in the Dead Heart of Australia. Port Moresby was a tiny, undermanned, underequipped garrison. Even Australians, who are not generally given to hysterics, admitted that things looked "bloody tough!"

Then MacArthur arrived in Australia from the Philippines on March 17. "MacArthur will fix things," everybody said confidently. He moved through cheering, madly excited crowds. He posed unsmilingly for an endless series of photographs. Restaurant chefs named dishes for him: *Pêche Melba*, MacArthur Sandwich. When he was seen travelling in his limousine between his hotel and his headquarters crowds mobbed him. He was seldom seen. But the reminder of what he had done was always there. People who telephoned his headquarters always received the greeting, "Hello. This is Bataan!"

Bataan was almost an obsession, a cult, with him. It still is. The army he had to leave behind on the corpse-littered battlefield of Bataan, in the blasted citadel of Corregidor, is never out of his mind. He lives, I am sure, for the day when he will stand again upon the soil of the Philippines. He seldom talks of the war against Japan without bringing in some reference to Bataan.

And when he does he usually gives solemn utterance to a sentence he has used over and over again, "I shall keep the soldier's faith." The dead of Bataan live in the hearts of many, and in the heart of MacArthur they live together with a brooding, eternal lust for vengeance.

MacArthur has admitted, with the bitterness of a man who has seen an ideal become an illusion, that when he arrived in Australia he expected to start at once building up a great army which would liberate the Philippines. The Australians, too, had expected that where MacArthur was, there would soon be the planes and guns and men of the United States. The great crusading force that MacArthur and many Australians had visualized never was built up in Australia. Perhaps, now, it never will be.

But in the month of March many things happened. Overnight MacArthur scrapped the Brisbane Line policy of defence. In its place he planned so that the Battle for Australia, if it had to be fought, should be fought in New Guinea, at the far side of the 800-mile moat of the Coral Sea. He could do this only by establishing his air striking power and his best garrisons as near to the Japanese as possible. At that time it was not certain whether the Japanese were building up to strike in the north-east, against New Guinea, or in the north-west, against Darwin. All Japanese operations were designed to create that very doubt in our minds. MacArthur shrewdly gambled on New Guinea. He was right. And into Port Moresby he threw his best troops, his best equipment, every aircraft he had available. With newly-arrived American material and with the aid of steadily-expanding Australian production he was able almost immediately to push his bomber line eight hundred miles across the Coral Sea to Port Moresby, which became, not a garrison standing beneath the shadow of invasion, but the major Allied operational base of the South-west Pacific.

The Japs were committed. Whether they wanted to or not, they had to face up to Moresby, which, if they had only known, could have been theirs almost for the asking less than two months before. MacArthur played his cards so that he dictated to the Japanese that New Guinea should become the major theatre of the Pacific War.

"It doesn't matter how much you have, so long as you fight with what you have," said MacArthur. "It doesn't matter where you fight, so long as you fight. Because where you fight the enemy has to fight, too, and even though it splits your force, it must split his force, also. So fight, on whatever the scale, whenever and

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wherever you can. There is only one way to win victories. Attack, attack, attack!"

It was MacArthur's policy speech. Since then he has had dark periods, but he has stuck to his platform. And it has worked.

The more he threw into New Guinea, the more the Japs had to throw in to meet him. Within a few months an island sideshow, a backwater of battle, had become the major theatre of the Pacific War, the focal point of the whole fight against Japan.

And, in proportion to the gains made, no section of the Pacific has been so costly to the enemy in ships, manpower, and aircraft. The fight was first to secure air domination. The infant American Fifth Air Force and the R.A.A.F. were "fighting with what they had." Hundreds of young airmen gave their lives to wrest command of the air from Japan's best Navy fliers. Against what should have been an overwhelming air superiority, they succeeded. From that time the air became the dominant factor in all MacArthur's plans.

Yet in July, when command of the air had at last been won and Australia, at least, seemed safe from invasion, MacArthur was far from satisfied. He called war correspondents together in Melbourne, outlined to them his conceptions of war in the Pacific. He spoke for three hours, and always through his speech there was the attitude of a man who wanted to lead a crusade, but who realized that the crusade had been indefinitely postponed. He still wanted to attack, but he was fighting on the defensive.

He had been in Australia for four months and Australians didn't really know anything about him. Yet he was still one of the major topics of discussion whenever a few people got together. His chestful of decorations was a novelty to people not yet accustomed to the fact that United States troops receive more decorations than the men of most armies—certainly very many more than are received by British Empire troops. And MacArthur wore everything from the Congressional Medal of Honour to his expert marksman's badges. They rarely saw him except when he came out of his hotel or when he was driving with Mrs. MacArthur and their son in a huge black limousine. Always he was grim and unsmiling. He could have been the lion of the Australian social world. Hostesses used every lure in vain. He went nowhere except between his hotel and his headquarters. The atmosphere of mystery grew rapidly. In Australia, where even policemen don't carry nightsticks, let alone guns, it was strange to see stern-faced guards swinging tommy-guns wherever MacArthur went. A striped canvas awning, an oddity in the

Australian scene, was thrown over the sidewalk at the entrance to his headquarters in an Australian city.

No man who has ever written about MacArthur has attempted to disguise the streak of showmanship that is part and parcel of the man. Since the days of Julius Cæsar, showmanship has never in itself prevented a man from being a good soldier. Australians asked only that the man who led their forces should lead them well. And as the months went by there was continued evidence that they were being led well. The Jap, instead of smashing down the Australian defence barriers, was not only being held, but he was being hit hard.

It was still impossible to get behind the real MacArthur. When he was interviewed, the four-star general would always have a stage property—a long, unlighted cigar one time, a chunky bulldog pipe another. And he used the properties, for gesticulation and emphasis, with the histrionic ability of Sir Henry Irving. When he was asked a question he never hesitated in giving an answer that was not only utterly complete, but was in itself, taken down verbatim, a polished essay on military lore. He could talk continuously for two hours and never grope for a word. Each talk would hold the complete interest of two score hard-bitten foreign correspondents without a second's flagging of their interest.

The General would race up and down incessantly (whenever he was thinking some problem out the whole staff would know and comment on the fact that "the Old Man is rug-cutting upstairs!"), drawing for parallel and metaphor on the writings of Napoleon, on a line or two from a melodrama he had seen in New York a quarter of a century before, on a speech by Lincoln, on a statement by Plato, or sometimes on a passage from Scripture. The tone of his voice would vary from almost a whisper to a ringing shout followed by a long period of thoughtful silence.

Occasionally he would write a statement to be issued under his own name. Nobody but MacArthur could have issued those statements so rich in emotion and drama, so studded with resounding passages of almost Biblical style. They were so completely unlike the statements of any other soldier in the world—and so utterly like MacArthur.

Deep piety, swift epigram, vivid description came from his lips or his pen with a facility that makes a book of "Famous Sayings by MacArthur" a distinct possibility. Sometimes he gave terse common sense, as in his famous, "Only those are fit to live who are not afraid to die," and his "Let's get on with the war" in reply to a question about political actions of Army officers. Of the



Japanese soldier he said: "He is like any other soldier; he is no fanatic; he dies with his mother's name on his lips." His most succinct comment was his answer to the question, "What is the formula for defensive warfare?" "Defeat!" snapped MacArthur.

There is plain logic in such statements as, "The springs of human conflict cannot be eradicated through institutions, but only through the reform of the individual human being." Another: "Victory in war results from no mysterious alchemy or wizardry, but depends entirely upon the concentration of superior force at the critical points of combat."

Often his statements have deep piety. Talking of the men of Bataan, he said: "I was the leader of that lost cause and from the bottom of my stricken heart I pray that a merciful God may not delay too long their redemption." In awarding decorations after the victorious Papuan campaign, he ended his citation with the words: "To Almighty God I give thanks for that guidance which has brought us to this success in our great crusade. His is the honour, the power and the glory forever." And in a special Easter greeting last year to the Christ Episcopal Church in Little Rock, Arkansas, where he was baptized, he said: "At the altar where I first joined the sanctuary of God, I ask that you seek divine guidance for me in the great struggle that lies ahead."

Some of his statements have the power of a trip-hammer. Once he said, in reference to a dead soldier: "I do not know the dignity of his birth, but I do know the glory of his death." His single sentence on Corregidor still evokes a picture that no other words have painted better: "Through the bloody haze of its last reverberating shot I shall always seem to see the vision of its grim, gaunt and ghostly men, still unafraid." His tribute to the men of Bataan was: "The Bataan force went out as it would have wished, fighting to the end of its flickering, forlorn hope. . . . Nothing became it more than its last hour of trial and agony."

By September the Japanese were running into trouble in the South Pacific. The marines had landed on Guadalcanal (an operation greatly assisted by the hammering which MacArthur's heavy bombers delivered to the great Jap supply base at Rabaul) and the Jap attempt to take Milne Bay had failed. But north of Moresby, where the Japs were sweeping over the Owen Stanley Range, the situation was critical for the Allied forces. It was then that MacArthur transferred his own headquarters to New Guinea. The Australian commander of ground forces, General Sir Thomas Blamey, was already there, living in a tent. There too, was General George Kenney, MacArthur's new air commander.

One of the luckiest things that happened to the forces fighting

in the South-west Pacific area was the War Department's decision to send George Kenney out to take command of the Allied air forces under MacArthur. Kenney was an evangelist for air power properly employed. His first—and most important—convert was MacArthur. Since then no general in the United States Army has been more fanatically air-minded than MacArthur. It was MacArthur who recently stood in the nose of a Flying Fortress to watch his paratroops descending on Lae.

MacArthur's peacetime record had given little evidence of air consciousness. He had been Chief of Staff when General Billy Mitchell was court-martialled, and throughout the Army he was regarded as against aviation. He would not ride in a plane.

But at sixty-four MacArthur was converted. His own experiences in the Philippines taught him the power of the aeroplane in war. The situation in the South Pacific revealed the impossibility of fighting an island war without aviation. But it was Kenney who showed MacArthur how to make air power the decisive element in his operations. The little air commander was a personal demonstration of air mobility. He flew back and forth so regularly between his two headquarters in Australia and New Guinea that two meal tables were always set for him, 1,500 miles apart, and nobody knew from day to day at which table he would be sitting down to eat.

One of the mild puzzles of the S.W.P.A. is how two men of such disparate types get on so well together. MacArthur is aloof and mysterious, with the streak of flamboyance that he rarely entirely eliminates. Kenney is friendly, almost gregarious, with neither the flair nor the desire for showmanship. The two men get along fine. MacArthur has publicly paid tribute to what he calls "Kenney's restless genius that drives him ever onward."

When MacArthur was confronted by the swift Japanese advance through the Owen Stanleys in early September, and by the problem of shifting reinforcements to New Guinea in time to meet the threat, and supplying them when they got there, it was Kenney who is alleged to have said: "Give me five days to prepare and I'll shift the whole goddam United States Army to New Guinea by air."

He sold the idea to MacArthur, and the Pacific Commander in Chief, in a marathon conference with Kenney and Blamey, mapped out the great pattern of air movement and supply which at that time made the Luftwaffe invasion of Crete seem like an elementary essay. A whole army, with its supplies of food and guns, was thrown eight hundred miles across the Coral Seas;

much of it was then flown over mountains whose peaks reach 13,400 feet, and for four months maintained entirely by aircraft. Altogether more than a million tons of war supplies were transported across the towering alpine spine.

This movement was the "swift, massive stroke" about which MacArthur later spoke at length. When the Papuan campaign was in its final stages MacArthur was in his headquarters, towering over diminutive, chunky Kenney. Someone asked the General if he was convinced that air power could win the war. He threw his arm affectionately around Kenney's shoulder and said, with a smile: "This little feller has given me a new and pretty powerful brandy. I like the stuff. It does me good. And I'm going to keep right on taking it!"

MacArthur's spirits rose as he saw his troops inexorably smashing the army of General Tomatore Horii. When he spoke of the campaign he spoke always in the first person. It was never a great body of troops manoeuvring, deploying, attacking another great body of the enemy. It was more a battle of wits between two commanding generals. Never, to MacArthur, was it so much a battle between two armies as it was a battle between two men. "He ran into the trap I prepared for him, and I shall drive him back to the beaches and annihilate him. . . . He had no idea of the plan I was putting into operation. . . . He never believed I could do it. . . ."

He could not conceal his pleased satisfaction when the reports came in that Horii—Japan's expert on small-boat landing operations—had been drowned when his raft overturned in the flooded Kumusi River. "An ignominious death," said MacArthur. As he spoke, however, there was an expression of regret on his face. The listener felt that MacArthur would have wished that he had fought it out with Horii and had killed him with his own hands. Often there was this grimness in MacArthur's words—talk of death and killing. He wanted to kill Japs because, I think, always at the back of his mind there was the picture of the men who had died in agony on Bataan.

Like everyone else in New Guinea at that time, he thought that the job of smashing the Japanese on the northern plains would be easier than it actually turned out to be. He referred to the Japanese as being "trapped within the Buna beachhead" on November 7, at a time when the enemy beachhead was actually nearly fifty miles wide. And it was several weeks after his order of the day was made—"Buna must be taken to-day at whatever the cost"—that Buna actually fell. And even then there was tough fighting to come.

Nobody, not even MacArthur, could have foreseen the tenacity of those beleaguered Japanese, but never for a single moment did MacArthur relax his pressure. He didn't want to drive them out. He wanted to destroy them. And he did.

He had fought a year of war in the South-west Pacific. He had built up a remarkable score of victories, small and large. He had suffered no lasting reverse of any sort. His one complaint was that he didn't have the stuff to follow through after his blows had made the enemy groggy. And, although he didn't say it, we knew that the thing that worried him most was the fact that employment of Allied force in the South-west Pacific was not dictated—as basic military principles insist it should be dictated—by enemy employment of force. His main concern was aircraft, for he had just completed a campaign in which the new worth of aircraft—for attack, for defence, for logistics—had been forever proved, just as the superiority of Allied fighting men and fighting equipment over the Japanese men and machines had been completely established. If the attitudes of Washington disturbed him he never showed it, never spoke of it. He was a soldier obeying orders.

MacArthur's position in Australia is unique and delicate. He commands a theatre in which all the civilians and most of the troops are of another nationality. When he took command, the Australians expected, as he did, that he would draw from the United States a great stream of troops and guns and planes. They were disappointed, as he was.

Yet MacArthur's popularity in Australia has never wavered. So far as the Australian Government is concerned, it has given an incredibly arduous task to MacArthur and, even under the most adverse conditions, he has carried it through without a hitch. It is generally said that Prime Minister Curtin would cut off his right arm and send it by air freight to MacArthur if the hero of Bataan asked for it. He hasn't needed it so far.

MacArthur is always careful to crush any tendency that the people may have to think that "the Yanks came here to save Australia." Whenever he has to issue a statement dealing with Allied troops he takes pains to see that it is worded "Australians and Americans" wherever it can be done, rather than "Americans and Australians." When the Australians were bearing the brunt of the battle in the Owen Stanley Range, long before the American ground troops had seen action, censorship instructions were issued to the effect that all Press reports should refer to the fighting troops as "Allied" instead of "Australian." There was some resentment among several war correspondents, who insisted that MacArthur was trying to convert what was a purely Australian

ground victory into a combined success. This was really unjust.. At that time it was important to prevent the Japanese from knowing that the Americans were being kept intact as a separate force to be flown into the north-coast areas for the final assault on Buna. MacArthur knows that by far the greater portion of the ground fighting in New Guinea has been done by Australians, and he has said again and again that he is thankful to have under him the A.I.F. divisions that saw such distinguished service in the Middle East.

MacArthur has been one of the staunchest supporters of Australia's war effort, has twice contributed large sums of money to Australia's war loans. "No nation in the world is making a more supreme war effort than Australia," he said. "It . . . embraces equally all classes and all parties." Because he is satisfied that he is being given what the Australians call a "good spin," he is careful not to interfere in the home scene. MacArthur's political support in Australia is all-party. Because so much depends upon him he could, if he desired, exert a profound influence on the Australian political structure. But his fight is against the Japanese, and he believes firmly in letting the politicians take care of the politics.

I am convinced that MacArthur has no political ambitions in his own country, the United States. I feel that one of the greatest injuries done to a man who has undeniably carried out a magnificent military job was the "MacArthur for President" campaign of the Chicago Press. MacArthur, I know, would much rather be remembered in history as the "liberator of the Philippines" than as President of the United States.

Few people, apart from those concerned with the drafting of his battle plan, ever see him. Once *Time* cabled me for an article on how the generals were living in New Guinea. I wrote a dispatch and was asked to send it up to MacArthur's headquarters for examination. Only one alteration was requested. Where I had said, "MacArthur is just as aloof and mysterious as when he was in Australia," the word "remote" was suggested in preference to "aloof." I altered the dispatch. "Remote" was the better word.

After the New Guinea campaign was over and MacArthur had returned to his headquarters in Australia, I saw him again. He looked younger than at any time since he had arrived in my country. His hair was black, his eyes alert, his step springy. At sixty-four he was the youngest-looking man for his age I had ever seen. He was no longer wearing his decorated uniform. This time he wore a pair of slacks and a simple leather flying jacket. The

leather name tab on the pocket bore the word "MacArthur," and four silver stars were painted on each shoulder. There was no sign of the early bitterness. He looked happy, he joked with correspondents, he answered every question they asked with frankness and, for him, a complete absence of theatricals. His confidence that the Japs would be licked could be detected in every remark, seen in every gesture. Perhaps the crusade seemed less of an illusion. Perhaps he felt that he had dealt out at least some retribution for the men of Bataan. At any rate his only comment was, "The dead of Bataan will rest easier to-night!"

15

## MAN WITH A MISSION

IT IS TYPICAL OF AUSTRALIAN democracy that the top-ranking intellectual of the Australian cabinet, Dr. Herbert Vere Evatt, is known all over the country either as "Doc" or "Bert." Evatt, who shoulders the portfolios of Foreign Minister and Attorney-General with a nonchalance that belies his tremendous importance in the Australian pattern of international development, is not only one of the most picturesque figures in Australian politics, but one of the most powerful. Australia's future in the international world is largely his responsibility.

Since Curtin assumed office, he has had many invitations to visit other countries, but always he has delegated the job to his Foreign Minister. Evatt has been Australia's "international politician"—always a man with a mission—and since Japan came into the war he has made two long and highly important visits to London and Washington. Each time he has done incalculable good for the cause of the Allies fighting in the South-west Pacific.

An American newspaper friend once said to me: "Evatt doesn't give a good goddam for anybody!" Which is perfectly true. He can sit in on a conference with President Roosevelt, and his officials, immediately address the President as "Chief," and unhesitatingly suggest, when formal opening speeches are being made, that "we cut out the cackle and get down to business." He is a rough-and-tumble dynamo with a strong sense of humour that is often quite elfin. But he knows when to punch hard and when to pull his punches.

His voice is the voice of a man who has never known the meaning of the word "servility"; the voice, in international discussions,

of an Empire dominion come of age. He has a fundamental honesty that is as far from the usual suave language of diplomacy as his own harsh accent is from the silken, smooth speech of traditional British diplomacy. But the solid, broad-shouldered, gnome-faced man with the steel-wire hair and mischievous dark-green eyes is rarely fooled—either by himself or anybody else.

Evatt is undoubtedly one of the most brilliant men that Australian politics has ever discovered. She is probably fortunate to have such a man for her front-line soldier in the tough battles of the diplomatic front.

His attachment to the Left in politics—and never in his life has Evatt swerved aside from his championship of the underdog—makes him a paradox that has been described by one writer as “an intriguing mixture of a Red and an old-world aristocrat.” He is something of an Australian Sir Stafford Cripps. Unswervingly loyal to Labour, he nevertheless has immense pride in his family’s lineage, traceable to the baronial Eyvots of fourteenth-century France. He is a native Australian, of good family but poor circumstances, who worked his way through school. He became, by Australian standards, a wealthy man. Yet he threw up a lifetime sinecure as judge of the High Court of Australia (corresponding to America’s Supreme Court) to contest a hazardous seat in Parliament as a Labour candidate, simply because he thought that the direction of Australia’s war effort was not in the best interests of the country. He is a pronounced Socialist. He can sit on the ground in the sun with his sleeves rolled up, and talk a common language with a road labourer; and he can sip cocktails in a drawing-room and argue the technique of Picasso and Cezanne with the knowledge of an authority.

At forty-nine Evatt is still a young man in politics, eight years younger than his Prime Minister. He was born in a New South Wales country town, the son of an adventurous Englishman who had emigrated to Australia and founded a small and not very profitable shipping business. He died when Evatt was young, and his six sturdy young sons set out with their widowed mother and very little money to make a new start in Sydney.

Young Bert worked his way through school. He got jobs helping politicians with their election campaigns. One day he came home late for supper and was sternly reprimanded by his mother. He explained that it had been election night, and he had waited for the results after he had distributed his handbills.

“Well, who won?” asked his mother sternly.

“The Labour Party,” the lad replied triumphantly.

"Then the Lord help us all," said his mother, a God-fearing woman.

But the boy's career in politics had really begun, although it was not to be pursued further for many years. At the University of Sydney he studied law in an atmosphere of Marxism and practical Liberalism. Scholarships took Evatt through his academic career, one of the most brilliant in the history of the University.

He chose the law as a profession, and after making an amazing record as an attorney, he became a judge of the High Court of Australia in 1930 at the age of thirty-six—the youngest superior judge ever appointed to a similar court in the British Empire. Still a young man, Evatt was by this time one of Australia's top-ranking jurists, scholars, and historians, but he was known only to a few in the land where a good jockey or footballer will earn wider fame in a year than the average academician will win in a lifetime.

He had many interests, ranging from Australian history to the national sport of cricket, from hot rhythm to scholarly researches into legal precedent. He is still a "swing" fan, has a magnificent collection of "hot" records, and believes that "what Australia needs is more swing!"

Perhaps his greatest obsession is the juggling of words. He will spend hours searching for the word he needs, always preferring the terse Anglo-Saxon to Latin or Greek derivations. Drafts of his speeches and the manuscripts of his books are seemingly chaotic masses of deletions, additions, and corrections. But the final article, whether a speech, article, or book, is always good.

In a life that has been far busier than most, Evatt has found time to write seven books, all as scholarly as they are factual ("I don't want opinions, I want *facts*," is one of his most often-repeated sentences), and ranging in subject from eighteenth-century history to constitutional law, a subject on which he is a recognized authority in the United States and Britain as well as in Australia. He went to great trouble to prove in one of his most popular books, *Rum Rebellion*, that Captain Bligh of *Bounty* fame was actually an honourable man. When he tossed the great, heavily-documented 100,000-word manuscript on to his publisher's desk he grinned and said: "Who the hell cares, anyway?"

Fame that came swiftly and early in life, a position of tremendous power in Australian politics, responsibilities of two ministerial offices and a personality that should logically be clouded by learned footnotes, all could have warped his outlook. They have



not had the slightest visible effect, and the sense of humour that is almost boyish remains to keep his feet on solid earth.

He hates pomp and circumstance, hates wasting time, and scorns the stereotyped political tricks that are common in any government. He goes after what he wants with a forthright directness that is aggressive and convention-shattering. He usually gets what he aims for.

When the British Empire declared war in 1939, he had just completed a 574-page biography of Labour Premier Holman which was in effect a history of Australia's Labour Movement. Evatt, still at school during the last war—in which two of his brothers were killed—and too old for this one, sat back and squirmed. His political career was almost forgotten—he had once represented Labour in the New South Wales State Parliament for four years—and now he had a lifetime appointment in a dusty, legal backwater of the High Court. Eleven thousand dollars a year and a life pension. The whole world would almost have to crash around him before there would be any effect on the orderly, settled routine of his very comfortable life.

Evatt writhed for a year and then did the unprecedented, the unorthodox. He resigned from the High Court to re-enter politics. He refused to pick himself some "safe" Labour seat, but campaigned for the Conservative, suburban Barton electorate amid a storm of publicity and controversy. With unbelievable energy he swept around the cautious electorate, fighting down its deep-rooted anti-Labour prejudices with swift wit and nimble repartee. How could a former judge of the High Court be anything but respectable? he argued. By election night he had convinced a majority of his constituents that Labour did not stand for confiscation of property, free love, or atheism. The Conservatives lost the seat. Evatt went into the Federal House of Representatives, where he was immediately put back in his place by the diehard Labourites, who considered him "too junior in politics for an executive position in the Party."

But when Curtin came to power in October of the following year, Evatt was almost his first selection for Cabinet rank. And Evatt received two of the country's most important portfolios—that of Attorney-General and that of External Affairs.

Pearl Harbor smashed Australia's isolation. By the time Singapore had fallen the enemy stood at Australia's gates. Bert Evatt was picked to get aid for his country, whose fate hung in the balance. He went to work with the forthrightness of a demolition bomb.

"Co-operation is a long word," he said. "But it only means this: we've got to work together, fight together, plan together." Australia had had previous Ministers for External Affairs. But she had never had any external affairs to go with the office. Everything was arranged through Whitehall, 12,000 miles away. Now it was up to Evatt to make a personal job of foreign affairs, particularly in relation to increased collaboration with the United States. Australia's overseas relations were entrusted to one man. That is why that man, Herbert Vere Evatt, is one of the most important Australians alive to-day.

Evatt went to Washington on his first mission. It was a time of acute crisis. Australia was standing firm in her demand for a share in the direction of the Pacific War. She objected to the fact that the Pacific War Council sat in London, so far from the scene of action. She sought more aid for the forces fighting under MacArthur in the South-west Pacific, and resented charges that she was "squealing" because of the Japanese thrust south of the Equator. Australia had the choice of sending a suave diplomat accustomed to the niceties and finesses and hypocrisies of the chancelleries, or of sending a blunt, unorthodox bombshell of a man. It chose the latter. When Evatt returned to his homeland the seat of the Pacific War Council had been changed to Washington, and Evatt had sat at its meetings; Australia's case had been put fairly and squarely; and the stream of American materials going to Australia had been substantially increased. Not only that, but Evatt had gone also to London, and corrected a few perspectives there. It was largely because of his efforts that Australia had at last become a voice in the councils of the nations, a voice that spoke with no inferiority on matters relating to the future of Australia and its role in the Second World War.

Almost a year later it became necessary for Evatt to visit Washington and London again—this time to try to convince those who planned United Nations' grand strategy that the accepted policy of "Beat Hitler First" was prejudicing the fight against the Japanese in the Pacific. Evatt didn't mince words when he told America the truth about Japanese concentrations along the Timor-Solomons line, about their rapid occupation and consolidation of the rich empire of the Dutch East Indies and the South Pacific islands.

On this visit to the United States I travelled across the Pacific with Evatt. One night I sat talking with him and his American-born wife, whom Evatt frankly admits is of inestimable value to him in making his tasks in Washington easier. On that occasion Evatt was vehemently denouncing some writer who had suggested

that Australia's overtures to Washington should be placed in the category of "squealing."

"Won't they ever damn well realize that what we want is not merely security for Australia!" thundered Evatt. "More than anything else we want continued and ever-increasing *insecurity* for the Japanese!"

That is the sincere and declared war aim of Australia's Minister for External Affairs. But beyond that, he thinks more than any other Australian politician of the time when peace will take the place of war. He believes almost religiously in the responsibility of the United Nations to make this world a better place for *all* people, irrespective of race, colour, or creed. Evatt is Australia-minded almost to the point of fanaticism, but he is also one of the most international-minded of Australia's war leaders.

His bombshell virility is employed against one task at a time. When you ask him his plans for the future he brushes aside the question with characteristic bluntness. "Why look beyond the target?" he asks.

But I know he is already looking far beyond the immediate target. His first job is to get the war won as quickly as possible. His next task—and in his own mind his most important one—is to see that the granting of the Four Freedoms to *all* peoples becomes a reality.

## 16

### "TYPHOID TOM"

THE NAME THAT ALL AUSTRALIAN troops call their No. 1 soldier, "Typhoid Tom," isn't at all derogatory. He is the only full general besides MacArthur in the South-west Pacific, and his complete title is General Sir Thomas Blamey, plus a row of decoration initials that would fill a paragraph. But Blamey's initials happen to be "T. A. B."—and the antityphoid injection given to all soldiers on enlistment is known medically as the "T.A.B. injection." It was as natural as that the night should follow the day that Blamey should therefore forever be known in garrison and outpost as "Typhoid Tom."

Blamey has the distinction of being the first to command Australian and American ground troops going into action together as allies in two wars. The first time was at the Battle of Hamel in 1918. The second time was at the Battle of Buna in 1942-1943. Each was an Allied victory.

In the peaceful days between the two wars—although Blamey, as Chief Commissioner for Police in Victoria, found life anything but peaceful on many occasions—the man who had been one of the outstanding soldiers of the first war did not forget the arts of soldiering. When a new war came he was the first man in Australia to enlist in the A.I.F. for active service. I think that the thing he is most proud of to-day is the fact that his enlistment papers carry the Army serial number “1.”

With the formation of the A.I.F. his was the logical appointment for the vital position of Commander-in-Chief. He remained Commander-in-Chief throughout the Middle East campaigns, and when war brought the Japanese close to Australian soil he became commander of all Allied land forces in the South-west Pacific, under MacArthur.

Blamey first proved himself a man of great personal courage at Gallipoli, in 1915, when he was a major in the Australian intelligence. It was Blamey, as a member of the A.I.F. General Staff, who worked out many of the basic details of the evacuation plan that carried a great army to safety without a single casualty when Gallipoli Peninsula had to be abandoned—an operation which experts earlier had believed would be very costly.

At Gallipoli Blamey had been no administrative “brass hat” sitting in comfortable, safe quarters mapping out dangerous ventures for other men to carry out. His intelligence work meant for him many dangerous night patrols, often almost into the Turkish lines, and more than once he saved himself only by a steady forefinger on a revolver trigger. On one patrol Blamey was out in No Man’s Land with two Australian privates when they were attacked by a large party of Turks. The three Australians opened fire and dispersed the Turks in a pitched fight that caused pandemonium right along the enemy line from Pine Ridge to Gaba Tepe. Eleven days later Blamey was one of the envoys detailed to arrange an armistice with the Turks for the burial of the dead. From a Turkish officer Blamey learned that his little patrol had killed “about sixteen Turks”; he learned also that the Turks had reported being attacked by a patrol of “twenty-five” Australians!

By June of 1918 Blamey, as Chief of Staff of the Australian Army Corps in France, had become the indispensable right-hand man of the late General Sir John Monash. The two men collaborated in making plans for the great 1918 offensive of the Australians. Monash later said, “I owe Blamey a debt of gratitude that can never be repaid.”

But if there were nothing else, one date alone—August 8, 1918

—would be proof enough of Blamey's military genius. On that day, described later by Von Ludendorff as "the black day of the German Army," the mighty Battle of Amiens began. The Allied offensive that was to roll the German armies back to disaster and eventual defeat had started. The battle orders for the vast operation of August 8, and for the succeeding battles which gave the Allies final victory in the last months of the year—a victory snatched right from the hands of the Germans—were devised and drafted by Blamey, then a brigadier-general. Since that day Blamey's orders have been used as models for all officer trainees in Britain's most advanced military schools.

The task itself was an immense one. The first principle of war is to "mystify, mislead, and surprise the enemy." Blamey had secretly to transport an enormous mass of men and materials to within a couple of hundred yards of the enemy lines. The disposition of the Australian Corps alone had to be made on a 7,000-yard front, and no fewer than forty-four battalions were marshalled into position under cover of darkness. More than 600 field guns and 360,000 shells (the lightest weighing eighteen pounds) had to be sent up. The Canadian Corps of 80,000 men had to be brought into the line with all equipment. To conceal the arrival of more than 200 exceedingly noisy tanks, Blamey ordered a squadron of Handley-Page bombers to fly low over the German lines. Throttled down, the tanks moved up. The Germans could hear nothing above the noise of the planes and their own anti-aircraft fire!

On the eve of the great battle it seemed that all the careful planning would be of no avail. A lucky enemy artillery bombardment blew up some British tanks which had been concealed in an orchard near Villers-Bretonneux. The German barrage, however, had been a fluke.

Zero hour had been fixed by Blamey himself, after three days of personal investigation of light and atmosphere conditions before sunrise. The smashing offensive was launched. Australians and Canadians moved forward in the first stage of the great battle. By nightfall 8,000 prisoners and 173 guns had been captured. Within two months the Allies were beyond the Somme, the Hindenburg Line had been captured, and the Germans were in full retreat to the Rhine. So brilliant had Blamey proved himself that he was called in by General Pershing to help plan the attack of the First United States Army in the Saint Mihiel salient.

Blamey once wrote down his impressions of events immediately after the Germans had been crushed at Amiens. "Sir Douglas Haig had asked Monash to bring the Australian leaders

to him. We assembled in the battered old Red Château in Villers-Bretonneux. The Commander-in-Chief began to speak: 'You do not know what the Australians and Canadians have done for the British Empire in these days.' He opened his mouth to continue, and then halted. The tears rolled down his cheeks. A dramatic pause, and we all quietly filed out. . . ."

In the early days of the present war there were many critics of Blamey. He was, they said, too old for modern war; too rooted in the conceptions of attritional warfare of 1914-1918; living too much on the glories of an earlier military career. Blamey had to prove that they were wrong. All he asked was that he be given good material. He saw his new A.I.F. tested in the sands of Libya, saw it fight an orderly retreat through the length of Greece while Messerschmitts and Stukas plastered every inch of every road; saw it fight the bitter campaigns of Crete and Syria; saw it hold beleaguered Tobruk for seven bitter and costly months. He was satisfied with the material. He seldom made public statements, but if the men of the A.I.F. were ever criticized for lack of discipline or for any other reason, he would jump into print with a sulphurous denunciation of the critics, and with a complete defence for his men. It is no exaggeration to say that Blamey, despite certain martinet-like characteristics, loves every single man who wears a slouch hat and a metal badge with the word "Australia" across his shoulder tabs. I have seen him in the jungles of New Guinea, with tears in his eyes and a choke in his voice addressing the motley remnants of A.I.F. units which had been cut to ribbons in the bloody fighting against the Japanese jungle troops and marines.

"Your fathers of the old A.I.F. were magnificent soldiers, with all the military virtues," he once said. "Yet never in the Great War were they set a task as terrible as your task has been. Nor could they have carried it out so brilliantly and courageously."

Blamey was the first senior Allied officer to visit New Guinea. He went at a time when the Japanese were pushing the Australians out of the Owen Stanley Range. Something approaching panic was sweeping Australian civilian life as the Japs pushed to within thirty-two miles of Port Moresby, last Allied base between the Australian mainland and the Japanese tide of aggression. Blamey stayed long enough to see his hard-pressed troops and to talk to them. Then he flew back to the mainland of Australia to report: "My boys say that Port Moresby will never fall to Japan. I find that the nearer one gets to the actual fighting line the greater the confidence and the better the morale."

Then he went back to New Guinea, established his headquarters in a tent, and lived there with his troops until the great struggle against General Tomatore Horii's invasion force was over. It was Blamey who flew across the Owen Stanley Range to a bare kunai-grass clearing on the north coast of Papua to prepare the plans for the airborne penetration of the United States Thirty-second Division right into the heart of enemy-occupied territory—a penetration which completely surprised the Japanese and was a vital factor in the final annihilation of all enemy troops in the Buna sector.

In New Guinea Blamey wore the shorts, slouch hat, and open-necked shirt with short sleeves that he regarded as the ideal uniform for troops on tropical service. The walls of the tent in which he lived were plastered with maps. And he watched the progress of the campaign with a caution that was rare in those days when the Japs seemed to be on the run and everybody spoke of walking into Buna in a few days.

Blamey was one of the few men in all New Guinea who publicly predicted that the New Guinea campaign, instead of lasting a few days, would probably last a few months. And that was what he planned for. In all, it lasted exactly six months to a day from the time the Japanese landed at Buna until they were finally driven into the sea at Buna or exterminated in the swamps and jungles and coconut groves.

And it was Blamey who paid the supreme tribute to the United States Fifth Air Force, which had been such a trump card in one of the most difficult battles of the war. "I am grateful to have had the support of what has proved itself to be one of the greatest and most courageous air-fighting forces in the whole world."

There are tens of thousands of American ground troops in the South-west Pacific who are fighting to-day under the command of "Typhoid Tom." Americans back home in the United States can feel assured that they are in capable hands. "Typhoid Tom" might be another of Australia's "amateur soldiers" . . . but he knows the game first-hand.

## V. TROPIC FLARE-UP

17

### THE FELLER WITH THE TUCKED-IN TIE

THE YANKS CAME TO AUSTRALIA with a suddenness that took the country by storm.

There never seemed to be any advance parties. One day the only Americans to be seen were a few pilots and naval officers, on leave in the southern cities. The next day sidewalks were swarming with eager youngsters, smartly dressed, suntanned from their Pacific convoy crossing, exploring bars and soda fountains and making dates with pretty girls. On every street corner men and women stopped the doughboys to ask them questions, to invite them in for a drink, to ask them to their homes for "real Australian home cooking." For the first time Australia was host to a foreign ally. And Australia intended to show the young men of America what its traditional hospitality, coupled with gratitude, could really mean.

There had been three weeks of lonely voyaging before the "fellers with the tucked-in ties" had realized that their destination was neither Alaska nor Canton Island, neither the Philippines, nor Midway, nor Iceland, nor Ireland. Handbooks on Australia began to circulate. Newspapermen travelling with the convoy were besieged by eager youngsters who wanted to know the answers to the four standard questions that all troops consider of first importance:

What are the girls like?

What do they drink out there?

Is it true that traffic runs the wrong way?

Will we get paid when we get ashore?

To the astonishment of most of the Americans, they found Australia little different from America. It was a first impression that never changed. But colloquial Australian was a language different from the idiom of America, and this was made rather more confusing by the fact that both countries often had the same slang words, but they were used with embarrassingly different meanings. "Bloody" and "bastard," they found, were words that the Australians favoured to such an extent that many Australian



soldiers would have been almost incoherent without them. It was to be some time before the Americans also discovered that the extensive use of the two "B's" did not, as they had believed, make the words permissible for *any* society. Occasionally Australian and American faces would beam when they found a mutual and identical use for certain slang terms. But more often it was a case of compromise. Australians traded "cobber" for "buddy" and "bonzer" for "swell." Americans exchanged "rookie" for "drogo" and "cutie" for "sheila." After a while it sorted itself out very happily for all concerned.

The currency of the realm was a more involved problem. Americans, accustomed to decimal coinage, found the unsystematic pounds, shillings, and pence incredibly perplexing. There were two copper coins—the useless halfpenny and the enormous copper penny, almost the same size as the American half-dollar. There were six silver coins, ranging from the tiny threepence (smaller than a dime and twice as irritating) to the florin (roughly equal to thirty-five cents) and the rare crown and half-crown. Paper money began with the ten-shilling (half-pound) note, skipped through the pound and on to the large-size sheets representing currency of proportions far too astronomical for any buck private to worry about.

American troops in stores and bars could be seen almost everywhere muttering a strange abracadabra: "Twelve pennies make a shilling; twenty shillings make a pound; one pound is worth a little more than three bucks. . . . God, why did I ever leave home?"

The troops soon found out that there were assets as well as liabilities attached to Australian currency. They received, to begin with, a substantial gain by the rate of exchange, the American dollar being worth more in Australia than in practically any other country. With special allowances, the troops soon found that they had more money than ever. Probably never before in the history of any American Expeditionary Force has it been the custom for troops to reach a payday with pockets still bulging with cash from the previous payday. Within a few months hundreds of soldiers were sending fat sums back to relatives in the United States. One sergeant technician had sent a hundred dollars a month to his wife in the United States (over and above the regular fifty-dollar allotment she already receives) every month for a year. One buck private in Queensland startled his finance officer by handing over a bundle of notes totalling \$1,200 with the request that it be banked. At a poker game I sat in on with some American air corps men at Townsville, the kitty

for one jackpot reached \$1,622. In New Guinea I watched, entranced, while two American sergeants cut high card for fifty dollars each turn of the cards! In a hundred crap games all over the continent thousands of dollars changed hands each night.

Even when the doughboys set out to spend their money it was hard to do it—unless they were prepared to undertake certain eccentricities—without spending much time and concentration. The cost of living in Australia is, for most of the things that count, very much lower than in almost any other country. For forty cents they could buy a huge and succulent two-inch steak with coffee (that was the Australian name for a brew that had little resemblance to any previously-known beverage!) and all the trimmings from green salad to French fried potatoes. Seventeen cents would buy a Scotch and soda. A good haircut cost twenty cents, and for thirty-five cents one could get the works—haircut, shave, massage, and shampoo. A large bottle of milk could be bought for two-thirds of a nickel. It cost a cent and a half to ride on any bus or streetcar from one end of a city to another. Twenty cents was the usual price of a good seat in the movies, slightly less than a dollar was needed for a first-class seat at a play. And the Americans were given all the concessions extended to the Australian troops.

Hardest of all things for the doughboys to get accustomed to was the fact that there was no tipping in Australia. "And that's where you really save dough!" one American corporal enthusiastically told me. One day I was in a barber shop. A fresh-faced American, just cropped, paid the required fee, then offered the barber a florin. The barber smiled and pressed the coin back into the American's hand.

"Not here, sonny," said the barber. "We don't tip out here. I guess we don't believe in it. In this country we reckon that everyone gets a fair wage for fair work done. The unions see to that, anyway. So save your money. You're havin' a good time now, but one of these days you're goin' to do a job for me, and for other people, that we could never pay for. So remember, no tips, and I don't mean any offence to you."

There was another aspect of money that was less cheering to the average doughboy. That was the confusion caused by the economic difference in basic note money. Most of the men, for many weeks, were inclined to look on the pound as roughly equivalent to a dollar. It wasn't until they had lost quite a few of them that they discovered that each pound was worth roughly \$3.25. After that they looked twice before making side bets during a game of stud or blackjack.

Americans spoke about the currency, about the liquor (beer was the national drink, and, until the Americans insisted, was rarely served cold), about the food, about the hospitality . . . and about the Australian girls. Mostly about the girls.

Don't take my word for it—read what one sergeant said in a letter from Australia:<sup>1</sup>

"A Yank who beats it into town looking for the same kind of a good time down here that he used to enjoy back in Kokomo, Brooklyn or Sioux City fortunately discovers that Australia is probably closer to the U.S. in customs and people than any other land overseas. Take the girls, for instance. They're even friendlier down here than the average American girls. If you walk up to one of them and ask for a date, you won't get slapped. Pick-up dates are regarded as natural, not scandalous. In looks and personality the Australian girl holds her own with the girls back home. She loves dancing. . . . At one G.I. service club dance recently, 600 local girls were invited to entertain 800 soldiers. And 900 showed up. As you all know, that dance was a paradise compared with the small ration of girls at Fort Bragg or Fort Riley social events. . . ."

So far as Australian girls were concerned, the arrival of the thousands of Americans came as a blessing that at least did something to readjust the girl-boy ratio of the country, which had been made completely lopsided by the half million Australian young men who had gone into the service. Moreover, the Americans were fine-looking boys, their behaviour was a model for all troops serving in foreign lands, they had plenty of money to spend, they looked smart and clean in their neat uniforms, and they talked the same language as the Australian girls, even though they did so with "a cute accent."

"The set-up makes the whole thing a pushover," an Australian major said to me a little wryly. The joke that has since become a standard chestnut had its beginnings in Australia:

"What have the Australian girls got that we haven't got?" plaintively asked an American girl in a letter to her boy friend in Australia.

"Nothing," was the reply, "but they've got it here!"

Within a very few weeks the number of marriages between American servicemen and Australian girls was running into hundreds. By the end of two months the situation was alarming even the Australian and American authorities. They took time off from practical mechanics of running a war to issue a whole

<sup>1</sup> Published in *Yank*.

string of warnings to would-be doughboy bridegrooms, pointing out the difficulties of wartime marriages, the problems associated with legal administration, migration quotas, and personal allotments. It didn't do the slightest bit of good. Marriages went on and on in an ever-increasing number. By the last time a box score was issued it seemed that almost every soldier of the United States Army in Australia would eventually be a married man. Some were even enthusiastic to the point of getting married to Australian girls despite the fact that they already had wives back home. They were suitably dealt with in a manner which discouraged further similar adventures into matrimony.

Trouble started, of course, when the men of the A.I.F. came home. It was the only trouble of any importance that ever arose between Yank and Aussie, and an understandable expression of human nature. There were brawls and fist-fights—99 per cent. of them over women—that caused no more serious damage than a few blacked eyes and bleeding noses. The fights were almost invariably started by the Australians who had come back from Africa to find that the girl market had been wholly cornered by the Americans.

On a Melbourne street corner I saw one of these eternal triangles in miniature. A young, handsome American corporal was strolling down the street, his arm linked in that of a pretty, vacant-faced blonde. Walking towards them was an A.I.F. private. He wore rough khaki that bore the colour patch of a Sixth Division infantry unit, and three blue active-service strips. As he came closer to the couple, he glared at the girl and snarled: "Yankhappy, I see!"

The blonde giggled nervously, the doughboy dropped the girl's arm and walked up to the Australian.

"Just say it again, buddy," he said quietly.

"Sure I will, sport," replied the Australian calmly. "I just said that the sheila there was Yankhappy. . . ."

Consensus of opinion among the crowd that circled round them happily was that they were very evenly matched in size, reach, weight, and fighting skill. They had each landed out one punch when the little blonde slipped through the crowd and disappeared. After about ten minutes of slogging, two soldiers, one American and one Australian, pushed through the crowd and pulled the bloodied combatants apart.

"Chop it," said the Aussie. "The jacks<sup>1</sup> will pick you both up, an' it ain't worth it."

There was a brief discussion. The four men, two Americans

. <sup>1</sup> Military police.

and two Australians, walked towards a nearby hotel. Apart from the two battered faces there was nothing to indicate that they hadn't always been the best of friends.

The Americans had been carefully warned on the troopships that it was always a bad idea to disturb the truculent independence of Australians by suggesting that the Americans had come to save Australia. Almost all the Yanks were careful to observe the rule. The few who failed to do so learned their mistake the hard way. But even then there was an understanding between Australian and American that no other foreign people, not even the English, had been able to achieve with the Australians. The perfect expression of this was shown to me in a Brisbane bar.

An Australian and an American were leaning across the sticky counter—both big, well-muscled men with tough faces. The doughboy turned around to prop his back against the bar and grinned at the Australian.

"Hi ya, Aussie," he said cheerfully.

"G'day, sport," replied the Australian.

"You guys must feel better now that we've come over to save the day."

"What d'ya mean—save the day?" spluttered the Australian. Then, suddenly remembering the currently favourite wisecrack, added, "Why, we thought all you blokes were fugitives from Pearl Harbor!"

Both thrust their chins out menacingly and began to move toward each other. A few feet along the bar was a Fighting French sailor, complete with red pom-pom cap. He clasped his stomach in laughter as he turned to the Australian.

"Good. Very good," he spluttered. "Fugitive from Pearl Harbor. Very good——"

The Australian turned from the American, took two swift steps up to the Frenchman, and put him flat on his back with one crisp right to the chin.

The Australian looked down at him.

"When we want you to join in, we'll ask you," he snapped. "Next time, Frog, you'd better mind your own bloody business."

The American and the Australian drank together until they were thrown out at closing time.

Fights that aren't started over women or racial pride usually begin because of the streak of Irish in American and Australian alike. In a northern garrison town an Australian and an American private had been yarning and drinking together for most of the afternoon. Later they were walking down the dusty street,

talking and joking cheerfully. Suddenly the doughboy stopped dead in his tracks and turned to his companion.

"What about having a fight?" he asked.

"Sure, why not," replied the Australian.

They fought for about five minutes with all the fury of bitter enemies, stopped as suddenly as they had begun, dusted each other off, and continued their walk as if nothing had happened.

All these things happened early in the war, while the crude international relationships of wartime were going through their growing pains. Tens of thousands of Americans have been in Australia now for well over a year. They have been accepted by the Australians as part of the local scene, and they have accepted Australia almost as if it were their own home. The overwhelming urge to "paint the town red" wherever they happened to be has had its day, and in its place has come the desire to see more and to know more of the real Australia. Not only do many hundreds have Australian wives, but countless scores have now become fathers. I have been told by hundreds of young Americans of their intentions to settle in Australia as soon as the war is over. Some, no doubt, will go back to America before returning, but there may be many who will never see their homeland again. Many enlisted men and officers are already investing some of their pay in Australian property. They save until they have enough to put down a deposit on a small shop, a little bungalow, a service station, or a piece of farm land. The balance is being paid off in small sums from each monthly pay cheque.

Many who have fought in New Guinea are eagerly awaiting the peace so that they may undertake commercial ventures in this untouched tropical island of plenty.

Whereas a year ago the average American was spending almost all of his leisure time and money around what fleshpots Australia had to offer, the average soldier to-day devotes most of his leisure to quiet, homelike week-ends and evenings in simple suburban homes and small Australian farms. Everywhere he is accepted almost as one of the family.

Over and above all the other factors that have welded two people so closely together is the basic one of common peril. Since the Americans arrived in Australia and the A.I.F. returned to their homeland, the two armies have fought together. Australian and American airmen have fought wing-tip to wing-tip in the skies; Australian and American soldiers have fought shoulder to shoulder in the jungles of New Guinea. And the brotherhood developed between these ordinary men in the most ordinary possible way. For long, weary weeks both armies fought on

meagre iron rations. The Australians had nothing with which to supplement their rations. Each American was issued two special vitamin tablets a day. So an American gave one of his pills to an Australian. It is in little things like that that real international understanding and comradeship are cemented. Australians wore American gaiters, Americans wore Australian slouch hats. Boxes from home were shared amid the stench and mud of the jungle battlefronts.

The Americans, who had often been staggered by the disorderliness of Australian troops in city streets, suddenly found that these wild colonial boys, tested in a dozen campaigns, were superlative fighting men, full of courage and iron discipline under fire. And they learned to value the rough tributes that came from the lips of these shaggy, dishevelled Diggers: "Whacco, you bloody beaus!" . . . "Good on ya, Yank!"

The differences between the land of the Star Spangled Banner and the land of the Southern Cross were only the superficialities of life. Comradeship and national respect were more important than the trivia. They began to think about the country's future. They began to think about things other than the fact that the standard of dancing in Australia was higher than in America, but the playing of the orchestras was immeasurably worse. There were more significant things than the poor quality of Australian coffee and the beauty of Australian beaches, and the fact that gambling had something of the importance of a great national industry.

Here's what Sergeant Dan Kielen said to me after he had been in Australia for six or seven months:

"When I first came out here I used to think only of the trivial things, like the hamburgers and the sodas and the rhumbas and the liquor. And then, after a while I got to travelling around. And I saw the country, marvellous country—some of it. I think there are fortunes to be made in country like that between Adelaide River and Darwin. People talk about the lack of water. Of course there's a lot of very dry land. But what you want is a Henry J. Kaiser to irrigate it. Get someone to say: 'If it can't be done, I'll do it!' It will be done in time, no doubt about that. People are much more easy-going than they are back home. Sometimes that's a good thing; sometimes it's a fault. The Australians are the most wonderful people in the world to get along with, but perhaps it's a failing that they're not likely to go out after new ideas as enthusiastically as we do. You see, the main trouble is that Australia is trying to run a continent with a population that should run a city. Back home they have the people. They push

out, they build all the time. You haven't got the people to do that. But this is certainly a land of promise. You have great cities. Melbourne and Sydney would stand comparison with any city in America and give a licking to most of them. You still have the pioneering spirit. You have the same way of life that we have in America, the same love of the outdoors, the same basic spirit of democracy. All you need is people—the right people. It seems to me that this war will give them to you. And then watch out for Australia. Because, so far as youth is concerned, this is the land of opportunity. There used to be a saying in my country years ago: 'Go west, young man!' Well, there are a lot of us Yanks who've lived in Australia and liked it who are going to remember that saying when the peace comes. Because when you go west in America you reach the Pacific Coast. And if you keep going west you reach Australia. That's where a lot of us will be making for when we've settled our scores with Tojo. . . ."

## A CONCISE GEOGRAPHY

**T**HE YANKS—SOME OF THE ORIGINAL arrivals who came from the southern states strenuously objected to the name, but their opinions were overridden by the Australians, who couldn't understand that certain Civil War bitternesses could survive after eighty years—found themselves in a country where an entire continent was a base for two major fighting fronts. Within a few months most of the doughboys had seen far more of Australia than most Australians had seen in their entire lifetimes.

Most of them came first of all to Brisbane, capital of the northern state of Queensland. The bulk of the state, at that time regarded as the most vulnerable and potentially dangerous area of Australia, was within the tropics. It was a likeable, easy-going land of warm sunshine and home-distilled rum, of great stretching acres of sugar cane and pineapples and bananas, of jungles and swamps and flooding rivers, and of the great Western Plains in which were located Australia's mighty cattle ranches. It was a state of great distances and few people. Local residents spoke glibly of "running up" from Brisbane to Townsville, second city of the state. Many doughboys later found out to their cost the hardships of travelling in the Sunshine Express between the two cities on a three-day, two-night journey that was almost as



hazardous and uncomfortable as crossing the Andes or trekking across Tibet.

Americans who had considered Texas big as states go, found themselves deposited from their convoys smack in the heart of an Australian state whose area exceeded that of Great Britain, Ireland, France, Spain, Portugal, and Italy combined. Their next shock was to discover that only 1,000,000 people lived in this enormous area, and almost one-third of these lived in one city, Brisbane. To the west and the north was the vastness of the brown plains, a land of great ranches (one ranch covers 11,000 square miles) where it frequently took several days of motor travelling to visit your next-door neighbours.

Brisbane, always the most hospitable of Australian cities, threw its doors wide to the Americans. The girls, notable even in Australia for their trim figures, beautiful legs, and suntanned skin, gave companionship unstintingly to the first foreign soldiers ever to arrive on Australian soil. And the doughboys, when they had overcome their first amazement at drinks served almost within the tropics without ice, planted themselves firmly at the bars and soda fountains and settled down to win their way into the hearts of Australia. It didn't take very long.

Brisbane was not unlike a southern city of the United States of similar population (300,000). It possessed a few extremely good hotels (the most luxurious of which was later taken over for senior United States and Australian Army officers and became one of the most colourful and spectacular and uninhibited of the world's caravanserais!) and an incredible number of unbelievably bad ones. However, it was not long before the tremendous influx of men in American and Australian khaki caused demand to exceed supply to such an extent that practically no hotel in the capital could keep its bar doors open for longer than one hour each day. With the same strangely perverted logic that has given Australia the most unsuitable liquor laws in the world, the odd hour usually selected for drinking was between 11 a.m. and noon! It was exactly the hour when nobody really wanted a drink. By late afternoon, when almost every man in Brisbane was hot and thirsty, every hotel in Brisbane carried a great sign on its locked doors: "SORRY. TO-DAY'S QUOTA SOLD OUT." Doughboys and Aussies alike scratched their heads in wonderment at the paradox. To-day, more than a year later, they are still scratching their heads at the same paradox. . . .

The Queensland city, however, served as a good introduction to the Americans, because it taught them in the most convincing manner possible that "Australia is so like America that it isn't

even funny." Elevators were called "lifts," streetcars were "trams," sidewalks were "footpaths," your weekly salary was known as your "screw," the horrible factory-made meat pie had the same quick-meal popularity for the Australian as the hamburger does for the American, and all traffic flowed smoothly along on the left-hand side of the road. The Yanks soon picked up the incidental differences, and a few of the smart ones even learned that you *could* buy hamburgers if you asked for "savoury rissoles."

Most of the Americans who received a short leave were content to spend it in the warmhearted, friendly, and unbelievably noisy hospitality of Brisbane, which almost overnight had taken on most of the outward characteristics of a frontier town. Some of the more intrepid of the Americans had a yen to travel and see something of this mighty and barely-developed slice of Australia. Even city transport had no air-conditioning, but once out into the rural areas the doughboy learned all about the rigours of war. The Queensland trains carried no diners, practically no facilities for washing away the great clouds of dust and soot and grasshoppers that swept in through open carriage windows, and only the most primitive sanitary conveniences. Even the few Pullmans on the long overnight routes had seen many decades of tough campaigning. Americans were warned with only slight exaggeration that "lots of people have died of starvation on the Queensland trains," and were urged to carry with them parcels of sandwiches and fruit. The alternative was to run the gauntlet of the rare "refreshment stops" when a wild horde descended from the train on a small, tumbledown frame shed with a roof of corrugated iron and a sign saying: "TEA. ROLLS. PIES. SOFT DRINKS." The period of struggle depended on the length of the train's stop, usually ranging from ten to twenty minutes, according to the importance of the town. Ninety-nine times out of a hundred there was only time to reach the counter, gaspingly ask for a mug of tea and a ham sandwich, scald your tongue discovering that the tea was far too hot to drink, and then abandon everything in the mad spring back along the platform in answer to the peremptory clanging of the train bell. Once every eight hundred miles or so there was usually a station at which it was possible to obtain a shower and a clean towel for a nominal fee. This was found to be economically unsound. The jaded traveller would return to his compartment with a false sense of coolness and cleanliness, only to have it dispelled five minutes later when the first great cloud of yellow dust, liberally sprinkled with burrs and grasshoppers, eddied in through the window.

Most of the Americans who came to Brisbane either went north to operational centres or south to the more settled and civilized section of the continent. Sydney—Australia's mightiest and most sophisticated city and the most American in appearance and way of life—was completely by-passed in the first American influx. Adelaide or Melbourne were to become the temporary homes of most of the Americans. With a population of 320,000, Adelaide was enough larger than Brisbane to be the third city in the land. It was one of the most beautiful and quietest cities in Australia, stretching through wide park-lands that stood on the fertile plain between the sea and the lovely Mount Lofty ranges. The Americans fell in love with this town of wide streets and spacious gardens and quiet homes and churches; of great white-sand beaches and heavy beer that carried all the punch necessary for a hilarious night in one bottle. The girls, again, were friendly, and the homes of Adelaide threw wide their doors to the sun-browned, smiling men.

Melbourne, erstwhile political capital of the whole of Australia, was reputedly Boston-like in its conservatism. The doughboys had been warned that here they could not expect the riotous, boisterous hospitality of Brisbane. Melbourne, they were told, was a city of formal introductions, a city of "entertainment in the home" rather than of night-clubs and entertaining shows. Second only to Sydney in size and importance, it contained more than a million inhabitants, and was the seventh largest city in the British Empire—and one of the most beautiful. More than a quarter of its total area was made up of parks and gardens, and streets and boulevards were shaded by wide-spreading trees. It was the capital of the next to smallest state in Australia—a state almost identical in its charm of landscape with the New England states—but within the "Cabbage Patch" lived a quarter of the entire population of Australia.

It took the Americans a few hours to smash all preconceived ideas of Melbourne reserve and frigidity. The most conservative of all Australian cities succumbed immediately to the thousands of young Americans who took the town by storm. Melbourne came closer to being a great city by American standards than any other place they had visited in Australia. They had been warned about its "freezing weather," only to find in the dead of winter that the lowest temperature was forty-two degrees Fahrenheit, and that snow was unknown. Ninety per cent. of the population of Australia has never seen snow. The remaining 10 per cent. have seen it only at the tourist resorts in the Australian Alps.

A week in Melbourne, however, was long enough for all Americans to come face to face with a major problem. It was a problem that had troubled local Melbournians for decades. The name of the problem was: "What to Do on Sundays." Melbourne—or rather that section of Melbourne which enacts the laws for living—has a traditional belief in Sabbatical calm. Most of the time the word "Sabbatical" seems to become confused with the word "sepulchral."

There are no hotels, no shops, no places of entertainment, no dance halls open on Sunday.<sup>1</sup> There are no Sunday newspapers. Essential transportation is whittled down to the irreducible minimum, apparently on the theory that there is no place to go and therefore nobody should need transport to go there. It is necessary to have both the stealth and the lack of ethics of a criminal even to purchase a pack of cigarettes from midnight on Saturday until sunrise on Monday. The purchase of alcohol is almost a capital offence. Favourite pastime, by an easy process of eliminating the things which can't be done, is to take a streetcar into the city and walk aimlessly around looking in the windows of the many fine shops. This has the basic disadvantage of being extremely tiring and of producing either a pronounced thirst or a pronounced appetite or both. It is a discouraging result, for no more than a few eating-houses remain open on Sundays, all hotels are closed, and the few soda fountains are usually besieged by a line of thirsty people which would compare with the crowds waiting for seats outside Radio City Music Hall at Easter.

In peacetime "Gloomy Sunday" could be tolerated, because there was usually enough gasoline to get to the splendid nearby beaches, but in wartime, with the streets packed with lonely service men, the situation became serious. There was a time when the city fathers of Melbourne raised their hands in horror at the "mounting vice" seen everywhere in Melbourne, at the stand-up, knock-down brawls which raged on city corners, at the "unseemly spectacle of soldiers sitting in the gutters with their heads in their hands." But the same city fathers made little effort—until their hands were forced by the clamour of Press and public—to give the soldiers wholesome entertainment that would combat effectively the dangerous combination of loneliness, homesickness and a "nowhere to go, nothing to do" complex.

Most of the Americans found friendship in private homes because there are fewer residential hotels and apartment houses in proportion to population in Melbourne than in any city of equivalent size in the world. And to-day, despite the gloominess

<sup>1</sup> Special Sunday-night movies have since been started for service men.

of its Sundays, there is no town or city in all Australia loved by the Americans so much as Melbourne.

Not all the doughboys were lucky enough to spend months in centres of civilization like Melbourne or Brisbane or Adelaide or Perth, lovely little capital of gargantuan Western Australia. Perth is notable for two things: the fact that it is the smallest capital city on the continent, and the much more important fact that it is acknowledged to contain Australia's most beautiful girls. Many other Americans lived for months in the belief that all Australia was a city-less wilderness of stunted mulga scrub and red dust and plagues of flies that cling like limpets to eyes, nostrils, and lips. Many Yanks who were posted immediately to townships like Cloncurry and Cammooweal and Oodnadatta and Alice Springs and Darwin could have been excused for thinking wistfully that their fellow-countrymen garrisoning Iceland or the Aleutians had had the luck of the draw.

Some came across the terrible Nullabor plains, linking South Australia with Western Australia, and rubbed their eyes in amazement at the enormous limestone desert, stretching like a billiard table for 100,000 square miles, without a single stream of water or the slightest undulation in the endless line of the horizon. Having made the journey, they could at least boast with some pride of having travelled on a railway track that went for 330 miles without a single curve—the world's longest stretch of straight track.

Some found themselves posted to strangely-named Oodnadatta, desolate staging point on the long and dusty railroad journey to the Dead Heart. When I was last in Oodnadatta (and I would never have been there if the plane in which I was travelling had not made a forced landing) my greatest wonder was why its name had ever been printed in such large type on Australian maps. A straight ribbon of railway track stretched across the flat brown plain from ruled-line horizon to ruled-line horizon. Oodnadatta was a black spot in the centre of this vast nothingness. Closer examination of the black spot revealed that it was made up of (a) the railway station of red brick, (b) a hotel in which warm beer cost twenty cents a bottle and cold beer thirty cents, (c) a general store with a 1913 calendar on the wall which carried an oleograph of the famous white-and-black stallions rearing in terror at a flash of lightning, (d) a rambling farmhouse alongside of which was a corral in which the sheep were herded at night so that they would not be taken by the dingoes (Australian wild dogs) which prowled the desolate landscape on an endless search for sustenance, (e) an airfield a few miles out with one of the finest

runways in the land, and (7) the unbelievable spectacle in these surroundings of an Elizabeth Arden beauty shop with one of the most attractive window displays I have ever seen, even including Fifth Avenue!

Americans were even reported to be at Marble Bar, way up at the top of Western Australia—a state of 1,000,000 square miles which was famously understated by the Australian official tourist guide-book when it said: “The landscape of Western Australia is fairly monotonous over great distances.” In the northern parts of the mammoth state the heat of the sun is generally as high as the rainfall is low. The so-called “richly fertile” areas of the state will support less than one sheep to each fourteen acres, which gives a rough idea of what the unfertile areas are like! Marble Bar, midway between the tumble-down seaport of Port Hedland (since a target for Japanese bombers) and the “town” of Wodgina, famous only to mineralogists as the world’s chief source of the rare mineral tantalite, takes pride in the fact that it is just about the hottest white town in the world. Temperatures rise to 125 and 130 degrees in the shade, and for one stretch of six months the town had no day on which the mercury failed to top 100 degrees.

I never saw any of the Americans at Marble Bar. Their presence in one of the world’s strangest towns was not sufficient inducement to take me to the end of the world . . . and beyond it!

Even Alice Springs, unofficial capital of the Dead Heart, located almost exactly in the geographical centre of the continent, was an Eden compared with Marble Bar. And Alice Springs was an important strategical link on the military road which tied the southern supply points and factories, through Adelaide, with the great military outpost of Darwin. A Government-owned railway system ran from Adelaide to Alice Springs, where enormous convoys of Army trucks took over and heightened the supplies across the great central deserts for 650 miles to Birdum. Here another train took over—the notorious, almost prehistoric “Spirit of Capricorn”—which conveyed troops and war supplies for another 400-odd miles through the stunted scrub and ghost gums and gigantic anthills to dusty, dirty, bomb-shattered Darwin.

Alice Springs, with its tree-lined streets and wide-verandahed houses cupped within the picturesque mica-studded hills of the MacDonnell Ranges, was just about the last livable town that the soldier passed through as he travelled toward the battle areas.

Darwin had nothing much to offer the soldier except the excitement of air attack, the terribly monotonous existence of living in

camps scattered over hundreds of square miles through the "mulga," the endless swarms of flies and dengue-bearing mosquitoes. Relief from the endless heat could only be obtained by swimming in the wide, crocodile-infested rivers or in the lukewarm waters of the Arafura Sea, where sharks were plentiful and a twenty-eight foot rise and fall of tide involved a walk of more than a mile even to get your feet wet if you happened to reach the beach at the wrong hour of the day.

The first Americans to reach Darwin—already strongly garrisoned by Australian troops—were pilots of the aircraft sent too late to save the situation in Java, or naval personnel who had been based at Darwin for operations in the Dutch East Indies. Later, many thousands of Americans were to be stationed in the wild, untamed country of the nomadic, Stone Age aboriginal tribes. Their airfields and anti-aircraft stations were sprinkled over a vast area where loneliness and monotony were always greater enemies than Japanese fighters and dive-bombers.

The Northern Territory has always been a lonely land. At the beginning of this war it was a country about which explorers were still writing books. In its area of more than half a million square miles there were vast spaces which had never known the feet of man. In the entire territory the population was 3,800 Europeans, 1,600 Chinese, and 17,000 aborigines. Darwin, in peacetime the major port of call for oversea Empire airline services, had a fluctuating normal population of 4,000, half of them Chinese. The rest of the half a million square miles was populated by fewer than 2,000 white men and Chinese peddlers. War brought many tens of thousands of soldiers to this barren, cruel land. They set to work to carve roads and camps and airfields out of the dusty forests, because before they could meet and beat Japan they had to tame the wilderness that was their home. And one day, when the Japs came over in droves, swarms of American P40s smashed into the Mitsubishi's. The whole sky was studded with the black and grey cottonwool puffs of anti-aircraft fire. Darwin was hitting back. . . .

Most of the United States ground troops were still in training camps in Southern Australia, learning last-minute methods of defeating the cruel and skilful jungle fighters of Japan. For them it was a period of difficult preparation for a hard campaign. There wasn't much leave now. There was no need to worry about the difficulty of buying hamburgers or of getting ice in your drinks without having to look for it. There were more important things to worry about.

And then the great troop trains began to steam northward.

The movement was secret and by night when it was possible. The Yanks came back to Queensland, because the great north-easterly state was the jumping-off point for New Guinea.

Great Douglas transport planes were streaming over the beautiful rainbow coral of the Great Barrier Reef. Convoys of grey-painted transports were butting the seas of the south-east trades, heading across the Coral Sea toward Port Moresby. After months of shadow-boxing, the curtain had gone up on the most vital struggle in the history of Australia—the Battle for New Guinea.

## 19

### DANGER—MEN AT WAR

IN THE MONTH OF APRIL the great puzzle to Army officers and to armchair strategists was still the riddle of Japanese intentions. The Japs were still flooding south through the Spice Islands and Micronesia. They were fighting furiously to establish two bases, each of which would be suitable for a potential invasion of the Australian continent. One was the island of Timor, within easy bomber range of Darwin and a splendid strategic stepping-stone to the virtually uninhabited north-west. The other was the jungled and mountainous territory of New Guinea, the second largest island in the world and potentially one of the richest, which spanned the north-eastern tip of the Australian continent like a great sleeping dragon.

Across Torres Strait from the most northerly tip of Australia it was a mere ninety miles to the south coast of New Guinea. Japan had strong footholds both in Timor and New Guinea. The geography of a bad and inhospitable terrain was our ally in the north-west. MacArthur gambled that the Japanese would try to strike at the north-east, from New Guinea, so that their invasion could come through habitable areas, along established lines of communication, towards strategic points from which they could deliver blows at the eastern seaboard, the most fertile part of the continent. If the Japanese could conquer Port Moresby they could attack the railroad terminus at Cairns in northern Queensland, and push down along permanent lines of communication through rich farming country towards the great cities and industrial centres of Australia.

Great forces, including naval units which had engaged the British sea forces in the Bay of Bengal, were massing at Truk,



Japan's powerful arsenal in the Mandated Islands. American and Australian reconnaissance fliers were daily reporting increased concentrations of Japanese pursuits and bombers on the New Guinea airfields already in enemy hands.

Attention was completely distracted from the north-west, but a tough fight which was to last for many months was continuing in the hills and ravines of Timor.

When they came to Timor the Japanese landed at Dilli, in Portuguese Timor, and Koepang, in Dutch Timor. A small band of Australians had been sent to the island ten days after Pearl Harbor. Most of the little band assembled to defend Dilli airfield. On February 19 two Japanese destroyers shelled the town, and an invasion force of 4,000 marines and soldiers were landed five miles from the town. The majority of the Australians were camped in the hills behind the town, with seventeen men left as a guard around the airfield. They were attacked by a force of more than 1,000 Japanese, but met the invaders with heavy tommy-gun fire and killed sixty. They blew up the airfield and retired into the hills. Their casualties had been one killed and two wounded. The Japanese consolidated on the airfield and sent out three strong columns to rout out the sixteen surviving Australians. They found them three miles away when they ran into an ambush and lost 100 killed by Australian gunfire.

For the next nine months the Australians, reinforced by Dutch troops, waged a ceaseless guerrilla campaign against the Japanese, operating from secret hideouts up in the 9,000-foot mountains. Hundreds of Japanese were killed in stealthy raids. A major attack was launched against the mountain commandos, but the Japanese were driven off, leaving 300 dead on the battlefield. Once six Australians sneaked right into Dilli and attacked the Japanese headquarters. Several times the Japanese called on the Australians to surrender, promising them honourable treatment. The Australian replies were always quite unprintable. The greatest "killer" of the Japanese Jungle Corps, a ruthless sniper known as the "Singapore Tiger," was brought down from Malaya to tackle the Australian patrols. His first meeting with the Australians was his last, because he was unlucky enough to meet a kangaroo hunter who was quicker on the trigger. The body of the Singapore Tiger was left on the trail with a note for the Japanese commander pinned to his shirt. That message, too, was unprintable.

It was to be many months before Australia realized that these tough, heavily-bearded fighters were still holding out in Timor, but in that time the eyes of every person in the great southern

continent were on the island of New Guinea. It had finally become clear that Japan must strike through Port Moresby.

Japan's first great invasion armada had begun to move southward through the scattered islands at the beginning of May, 1942. Officers carried large-scale maps of Port Moresby, showing areas divided up for Army command and Navy command, even showing the buildings and areas which were to be set aside as compounds for the Allied prisoners who would be captured. Airfields, mountains, roads, and streams had already been given new Japanese names.

Aircraft of MacArthur's command went out to meet them. Pursuits and dive-bombers and torpedo planes from the United States naval task force in the South Pacific struck at the Japanese armada headed down through the Louisiade Archipelago and turned toward Port Moresby.

By May 9 the Battle of the Coral Sea was over. The gallant United States aircraft carrier *Lexington* was at the bottom of the ocean. But Japan had lost two aircraft carriers and many other ships and had suffered her first decisive defeat of the war. The shattered remnants of the invasion armada that Lieutenant-General Tomoyoshi Koga had built up to conquer Port Moresby was in full retreat toward Rabaul and Truk. The Battle for New Guinea had been staved off by the skill and courage of the United States Navy, which had chalked up its first triumph over Japan in the long struggle to avenge Pearl Harbor.

General Koga went back to Rabaul to work out new plans for smashing Moresby. It had become the great stumbling-block to further conquest. Japan had a ring of iron round the Bismarck Archipelago and the northern Solomon Islands. She had outlying garrisons on the north New Guinea coast. All she needed was control of Port Moresby, for if she had that control she could throttle the vital United States-Australian supply line, she would have New Caledonia almost at her mercy, she could consolidate in the Solomons for further penetration through Fiji to New Zealand, and she could build up a great striking power on the Papuan coast for the assault on the eastern coast of Australia.

The whole future of operations south of the Equator hinged on the fate of a sleepy little tropical seaport, with a few hundred decrepit bungalows, two or three dusty streets and a couple of copra jetties.

Into this derelict town was poured the defensive strength of Australia. Men slaved night and day in burning heat and enervating humidity to establish munitions and gasoline dumps, to lay down new airfields and dispersal areas, to carve roads out of

the ghost gums and jungle tracks out of the rain-soaked wilderness of lantana and lawyer vines.

On the ground everything was preparation, mostly for defence, but partly for attack, because all work was under the command of a man who had established his defensive policy as one of aggressive warfare. The preliminary battle was being fought in the air. Young American pilots were fighting one of the hardest air struggles of the Second World War—the battle for command of the New Guinea skies. Already American pilots and American planes outnumbered Australian. It was a different story on the ground. All the fighting troops in New Guinea were Australian. Only advance parties of the American divisions had arrived. They were the Negro troops of engineer detachments and a few white officers.

It was on July 22 that Horii struck again. This time he landed a force estimated at between 3,000 and 6,000 men on the north coast of Papua at Gona and Buna, roughly 120 air miles across the towering Owen Stanley Mountains from Port Moresby. The Japanese commander brought good fighters with him, men of the Fifty-fifth Nipponese Division, who had conquered Guam and Rabaul and who had been aboard the transports which were driven back after the Coral Sea Battle. They were now driven off the beaches by the fury of the Allied air attack and pushed rapidly inland toward the foothills of the main range. In the strategic mountain village of Kokoda 660 Australian militia soldiers of the Thirty-ninth Battalion (mainly draftees) waited for them. For a month the little band stood firmly in front of Kokoda and stemmed the advance of 3,000 Japanese. Then the enemy threw in reinforcements and launched an all-out attack. The tiny native village changed hands three times in bitter clashes that raged through a critical week-end. When the militia troops were finally forced to retire, fewer than 300 of them marched out alive. The Japanese pushed deeper into the heart of New Guinea, pressed on through the high crags of the Owen Stanley Range which everyone had considered "impassable." As they drove down the southern flanks of the mighty range to within thirty-two miles of Port Moresby, another battle was fought two hundred miles to the eastward, in the tangled swamps and spreading coconut plantations of Milne Bay. This time they walked into the trap that MacArthur and Blamey had prepared for them. Instead of making a landing at a point which they believed was defended only by an outpost garrison, the enemy marched straight into a first-class defence base, built up by Australian and United States engineer detachments during weeks

of slavery in stinking, humid, malarial swamps. Ten thousand picked Australian troops, who had fought the campaigns of Libya and Syria, were there to meet them. Two squadrons of American-built P40s manned by crack Australian fighter aces were operating from the three airfields which American engineers had planned and built. American bombers of the Fifth Air Force hammered them night and day. Within five days the bloody Battle of Milne Bay was over. The Japanese force was annihilated, and Horii's attempt to establish a sea-air base which would flank Port Moresby for the final assault had failed.

In the Owen Stanleys the position was more disquieting. There was a note of concern even in MacArthur's communiqués, and the feeling of alarm engendered by Press dispatches from both Australian and American correspondents spread through Australia. War was coming closer to the mainland. Townsville, Queensland's second city, had already been bombed three times. Darwin had taken almost fifty air raids. Bombs had fallen on several towns on the north-west coast. Submarines had shelled Sydney, the largest city in Australia, and torpedoed a ship tied up to a wharf almost in the heart of the great city. Newcastle, industrial nerve centre of the whole Commonwealth, also had been shelled by Japanese submarines. There was an alarming increase in the number of merchant ships sunk by Japanese submarines operating almost within sight of the towns and cities on the eastern and southern coastline. And Japanese jungle fighters were rolling back the Allied defences in New Guinea, threatening the last bastion that stood between them and the mainland continent.

August and September were also months of crisis in Australia. The Allies were fighting with what they had, but they had temporarily lost the initiative everywhere except in the air. That was the reason why Australians accepted the new peril more stoically, more optimistically. For the first time in operations against the Japanese the enemy had lost their air dominance which had been his trump card in all aggressive moves. Moreover, the swarms of American planes throbbing through the blue spring skies, and the thousands of doughboys in streets and camps were strong indications that Australia was not fighting alone to defend herself.

Dutch airmen were patrolling the seaways in the Dornier flying boats saved from the Java debacle. Other Dutchmen were training in modern B25 medium bombers. British Spitfire pilots of the Royal Air Force were arriving. Fighting French sailors were manning merchantmen and sloops, and scores of Dutch freighters

and passenger ships were running convoys of urgently-needed war supplies to New Guinea and Darwin. Out in the grey swells of the Tasman Sea British and American and Dutch and Australian warships were waiting to shepherd in the Liberty ships bringing war materials from the Pacific Coast. For the moment, however, the defence of Australia was dependent upon the defence of Port Moresby, and that defence was entirely in the hands of American and a few Australian squadrons, and Australian ground troops.

General Blamey flew to New Guinea as the Japanese pressed on through the mountains. They had only two more ridges to surmount before they would smash through the mountain barrier and reach the more undulating garrison area, with its food and supply dumps and easy means of communication. The troops showed no sign of fear, no lack of confidence.

"The Nips will never get Moresby," they asserted.

It was a healthy contrast to the general opinion in the garrison only a few months before that Moresby would scarcely be able to hold out for the stipulated thirty-six hours if the Japanese came.

Back on the mainland the people pulled in their belts once more. Food, clothing, and gasoline rationing was tightened again. Priority in everything went to the troops holding the outer defences in the New Guinea jungles. All Australian manpower was combed again to get more men into khaki. Thousands of women volunteered for the services to release men for the one thing women were not allowed to do—actual combat fighting. Civilian travel by road, rail, sea, or air was prohibited so that every means of transportation might be at the disposal of the military authorities charged with the job of moving men and materials northward to meet the new menace.

Australia finally knew the real meaning of total war—whether realization came to them in the dripping jungles of New Guinea, where death and terror lurked on every hand, or in the blacked-out streets of mainland cities.

## GLOBAL STRATEGY

**B**Y SEPTEMBER THE WORLD HAD realized that the "tropic sideshow" in the Australian battle theatre had suddenly become the major centre of the whole struggle against Japan. In Australia itself there were more than two hundred special correspondents and war correspondents grinding out millions of words of

copy that was factual, imaginative, analytical, conjectural, optimistic, pessimistic, persuasive, dissuasive, and almost every other synonym and antonym in the thesaurus. The result of this flow of words—described by one embittered censor as “the greatest attack of verbal diarrhoea since the war began”—was utterly to confuse the people, not only of Australia, but of Britain and the United States. A new phrase cropped up in a hundred Press dispatches—“global strategy.” In each of the hundred dispatches it was given a slightly different interpretation.

The thing that mattered to Australia and to the men fighting in that battle zone was that global strategy placed the whole of the Second World War, with its many fronts and diverse actions, into one general pattern and in that pattern the South-west Pacific was a very tiny corner. Washington and London made it reasonably clear that the action in New Guinea, although threatening and spectacular, was “tactical and local, rather than strategic and general.” It was hard to convince men who were dying in hundreds that the show was generally unimportant. It was hard to convince Australia that Japanese moves designed, in the final analysis, to subjugate the continent were of less importance than the Burma monsoons or the movement of armour in Libya.

Contentions were as varied as their sources were original. American war correspondents, writing actually from the scenes of battle, had their opinions relegated almost disparagingly to back columns, while the opinions of a colonel of the Red Army in Russia on the New Guinea campaign were given heavily-leaded space on front pages. Writers in Washington and New York were believed to have much more knowledge of what was happening “out there” than the few hardy American, British, and Australian war correspondents who were dodging bombs and machine-gun bullets to obtain the true picture. The same thing was happening in Australia. Men went out with jungle patrols, talked with the troops who had been meeting the Japanese, risked their lives to find out the exact importance of Japanese moves. Their stories were killed because they did not tally with the opinions of majors and colonels of the “Chairborne Divisions,” who had never seen a jungle, nor a Japanese, nor heard a shot fired in anger.

It is possible now, in the light of subsequent events, to attempt some sort of analysis of the events of that critical time. Captured Japanese documents proved that the penetration of the Owen Stanley Range was a preliminary move to the final attack on Port Moresby. The force sent across the range had the task of drawing

off a large portion of Moresby's defence troops. The party sent to Milne Bay was to establish a flanking sea and air base. Then the main Japanese force would strike from Rabaul, in December, to overwhelm the most important Allied base in the South-west Pacific. The plan failed for three reasons. The Owen Stanley force was driven back across the range and annihilated. The Japs were defeated at Milne Bay. And the United States Marines, landing and taking Guadalcanal and Tulagi, achieved both a conquest and a diversion that completely ruptured Japanese plans.

It is my firm opinion that the plan to move against Port Moresby was the last of Japan's aggressive operations in the Pacific war. Her operations since then have been conducted either for the purpose of consolidation or to save face lost because of Allied successes. And their actions will, I believe, continue to be defensive and holding until Japan is finally defeated.

However, at the time when Japan was winning swift triumphs in the jungles, the enemy still appeared to be victorious in any terrain that he selected for his fighting. It is true that we had won and maintained an air supremacy which was invaluable in preventing enemy reinforcement and in shattering his system of logistics. But it was enormously costly. Planes do not have to be destroyed by air attack or shot down in combat to lose their value in tropical warfare. Normal wear and tear is quickened by constant humidity, poor airfields, and bad flying country. The life of a combat aircraft is a short one, even when it is lucky enough to escape the bullets of Zeros, the bombs of Mitsubishi's, and the fire from anti-aircraft guns. And the thing Australia most needed to keep hitting the enemy was aircraft—a constant stream of replacements of bombers, pursuits, reconnaissance planes, and transports.

The protagonists of global war suggested at that time that Australia was too widely separated from the more important features of general strategy to be given more than was necessary for a continued "holding campaign." Reports from MacArthur's headquarters that the Japanese were pushing in tremendous reserves of aircraft, warships, transports, and trained fighting men failed to convince them that the Japanese were staking much on a campaign for Port Moresby, the one garrison that was still holding out against them.

The official attitudes towards Australian appeals for more aid could be divided into three broad categories. One school of thought took the line, "If Australia's fears are true it is just too bad. She will have to *hold* the enemy with what material she has

already, because at this stage additional war supplies cannot be spared for Australia at the expense of more important fighting fronts." The second opinion was that Australia could not be spared extra matériel because the continent could never be used efficiently as a base for the march back to Tokyo. The third—and minority—point of view was that Australia was "squealing" again, as she had squealed whenever it seemed that war was approaching her own shores.

Actually, what a great many people failed to realize was that the Australian zone was being used as an enormous magnet to attract Japanese forces south of the Equator. The more the Allies were prepared to throw into the battle, the more Japan would be committed to exposing her own forces to our attack. Previously Japan had conquered in giant strides, and with comparatively small losses. For the first time in her war against democracy she was now piling up heavy losses and she had no territorial gains to show for her expenditure.

There were a great many Australians who believed that the final conquest of Japan would come through Burma and China. But in the meantime the first British offensive in Burma had failed, and the task of getting war supplies into China on a large scale was out of all proportion to the value of the material once it had arrived there. And all of the Pacific war had been crystallized into the island campaign that raged from the mountains of Timor and New Guinea to the bomb-torn beaches of the Solomons. This at least was a campaign which had a basis of logistical practicality, for Australia was a settled land, with good harbours and docks, numerous airfields, and excellent highway and railroad facilities. It was, in fact, a perfect feeder base for the war against Japan, and the supply route across the Pacific to Australia was open to the ships of the United Nations, moving under the endless vigil of the United States Pacific Fleet. And it was the last of such bases still remaining in Allied hands.

Global strategy was built on a framework which rightly gave first importance to the European theatre. The slogan, Beat Hitler First, was military logic, and I have yet to meet an Australian or an American fighting in the Australian zone who ever disagreed with its fundamental soundness.

The objection in the South-west Pacific was that the arbiters of war strategy who lived 10,000 miles away regarded the Beat Hitler First policy as one of such inelasticity that Japan was more or less placed aside on a shelf to be dealt with at some future date. And in the meantime Japan could continue her probing into our last bastions and consolidate a great outer chain of defences



behind which she could develop and exploit the vast and wealthy tropical empire which she had conquered so easily, very largely because of democratic procrastination and shortsightedness. Every day that Japan was left in undisputed possession of her Pacific gains would mean an incalculably greater toll in lives, material, and time when the moment came at last to turn the weight of Allied power against the common Pacific foe.

There was never any suggestion in Australia—as might have been inferred from some of the references in the United States Press—that Washington's attention should be shifted right away from Germany and turned toward Japan. There was merely an indignation—as widespread among American troops out there as Australians—and a wish that something should be done about amateur and professional global strategists who were doing their utmost to substitute in the minds of the American people the slogan "Forget Pearl Harbor" for the slogan which, in December of 1941, had brought the people of America together in a common unity of fury against the treacherous little enemy across the Pacific.

Toward the end of September, MacArthur had to decide to go ahead and attack with what he had. He at last put in his first large-scale counter-offensive against the army of General Horii. He knew that he would depend more than anything else upon air support both for attack and defence. He had twenty fewer planes available at the end of September than he had had at the beginning of May, when the earlier enemy invasion attempt was smashed at the Battle of the Coral Sea. And this time the Japanese were immeasurably stronger on all counts.

Up in the mountains of New Guinea the Japanese had been reinforced by crack troops of the Fifth Nippon Division, men who had carried out the rape of Nanking and the conquest of Singapore. But the Japanese, with a belief in their own invincibility that went beyond the bounds of practical warfare, had underestimated both the temper of the enemy and the terrible power of the New Guinea jungle. The Australian retreat had become a clever and planned withdrawal designed to lure the enemy beyond their supply lines so that the American fliers could hamstring their food and ammunition columns and bases with day and night air attacks. By the time the Australian troops—Seventh Division veterans of Libya and Syria—were ready to strike back hundreds of Japanese had died of starvation and disease in the mountains and tangled ravines that formed the world's toughest battleground.

Australian artillery roared from the high slopes as the counter-

attack began. The Japanese fled back to the 7,000-foot pass through the mighty range. They stood there and fought bitterly until they were dug out by Australian bayonets and grenades. The American troops had not yet gone into action, although many of them had already marched or gone by transport planes to the battle positions which MacArthur and Blamey had prepared for the closing stages of the campaign. Kokoda, with its hundreds of Japanese graves and debris of war, was captured without a fight. The Japs stood to defend the Kumusi River, but were massacred by the Australians, now advancing with a new and unbeatable spirit because they had heard that their sister Ninth Division, still fighting in Libya, had smashed Rommel's line at El Alamein.

Overhead, day and night, roared Kenney's aircraft—bombing, strafing, and transporting supplies. The crack jungle and air fighters of Japan, outfought in the jungles by Australians and outflown in the air by young Americans, were experiencing the sour taste of defeat again. The South-west Pacific might have been a small corner in the general pattern of global strategy, but it was out there that Japan was fighting its most desperate battle of the Pacific War. For although the Allied Supreme Command was mainly worried about beating Hitler first, MacArthur and the fighting men under his command had only one desire—to lick the Nips, and to lick them as swiftly as possible.

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### PATTERN FOR CONQUEST

BY THE MIDDLE OF 1942 the least air-minded person in the world would have realized the extent to which the fighting in the South-west Pacific depended upon air power. It had become evident with the first Japanese air attacks against the vital bases of Port Moresby and Darwin that *all* power depended on air power. Warships, even whole armies of American and Australian troops, were so utterly reliant on the little silver specks that arrowheaded through the skies above them that all fighting strength for attack or defence was limited by the number and efficiency of the combat aircraft forming the air umbrella. Without that air umbrella almost any naval or military movement was impossible.

And the tropic islands north of Australia were the backcloth for

one of the most amazing stories of air courage and superb air generalship this war has seen. It was a story largely told by the United States Fifth Air Force, the nucleus of which had been the handful of B17 and B26 crews who were the first Americans to see action in the Australian zone.

The campaign, which had many aspects unique by Second World War standards, saw new methods of employing combat aircraft—methods for which the aircraft had never been designed, but which were carried out on the basis of, "If it works, then go ahead; if not, then try something else." It saw new conceptions of air power in support of fighting armies. It saw a sensational triumph of quality over quantity. And it saw a new international comradeship-in-arms grow up between the airmen of the United States Air Force and of the Royal Australian Air Force, who together thumbed their noses at the best that Japan could hurl against them. . . .

It was, also, a tremendous triumph for the American combat aeroplane. Of all the types of machines that have been used in the South-west Pacific (at the time of writing the known number is twenty) sixteen have been of American design, two have been British, and two Australian. The deadliest killers were the B17s in the heavy bomber group, the B26s and B25s in the medium group, the P38 in the pursuit group. The A20 shared with the British Beaufighter all the honours in low-flying ground attack. With the exception of the Beaufighter, all were American planes.

When the final defeat of the Japanese forces in Papua took place on the corpse-littered beaches of Buna and Gona and Sanananda there was not a single infantryman in the American or Australian armies who did not give thanks to the magnificent six months' fight of the Air Force, a fight that made ground victory possible. Said Australia's tough, hard-swearing General George Vasey, veteran of two wars, "We were given the best air support I have ever seen under conditions which were the worst in the world for good air support." Said General Eichelberger, commander of the United States troops, "Never has an air force been called upon to do so much and done it so magnificently." Said Brigadier George Wooten, who commanded the A.I.F. shock battalions in the bitter battles of the swamps and beaches, "Nobody in Australia will ever be able to appreciate just how much we owe to the Fifth Air Force!"

The fight began in March, when a single squadron of P40 fighters, manned by Australians, and half a dozen Flying Fortresses that had escaped from Java set out to wrest control of the air from the Japanese.

Twenty minutes after the P40s arrived at Port Moresby a wandering Japanese reconnaissance bomber was shot down into the sea in flames. It was the first "kill" for the Allied Air Force in the New Guinea theatre. The war in the air was on. Within a week it had reached a point where the Japanese were prepared to go all-out to smash this upstart air squadron that had had the temerity to challenge their command of the skies. Within two weeks the Australian squadron was shot to ribbons, but it had taken terrific toll of the enemy. For the first time Japanese air strength was being met with strength.

Despite an overwhelming superiority in numbers, the Japanese had lost four planes to every P40 brought down. Eventually the original pursuit squadron was destroyed, but it had established a standard that was to live. It was replaced by two squadrons of American-flown P39s. It was a hard job for these American kids, thrown overnight into a major air battle over flying country regarded as tough even by peacetime standards. Always they were outnumbered by the swarming Zeros and Mitsubishi's and Nakajimas. But their task was to win control of the air, and if they couldn't do it with numbers they were forced to do it with superior courage, better planes, better airmanship, higher morale.

Often the odds were ten to one against them. Their bases were bombed day after day; their dispersal areas were blasted; their scanty stock of aircraft was whittled down again and again. But the kids from Texas and Georgia and Oklahoma and California patched up the damaged planes to make one airworthy machine out of three corks, and went out to meet the Japs next day. The Zero dominated the New Guinea skies and the air trails of the Arafura Sea. Hundreds of youngsters—American and Australian—gave their lives to smash that domination, knowing that if they went to their death but took two or three Japs with them they were slowly getting an edge on the enemy.

There were no fighters to escort the B26s, so the kids took them out on daylight raids, almost every day, against Japan's key base at Rabaul, the extreme range for these hard-hitting bombers. Many were lost in combat, many more failed to make the distance back to their base and were posted "missing" somewhere in the impenetrable jungles or reef-scarred seas. Even the pilots themselves cheerfully spoke of their missions as "suicide raids." One day eight B26s went out over Lae. Only one came back, and it had to make a crash landing on its belly and was written off as "no longer serviceable."

Young Americans took their machines up during those black days white and sweating with fear. But they went up . . . and that

was the supreme expression of their courage. The official communiqués didn't dare admit the extent of the losses we were suffering. The only comforting fact was that, against this overwhelming Japanese air superiority, we had a qualitative edge that had raised the ratio of enemy combat losses to five to one.

It's difficult to say now exactly when the position changed. It was sometime in June, after the Japanese, licked at the Battle of the Coral Sea, had suddenly withdrawn their first-string Navy pilots and replaced them with Army fliers. The Japanese Army pilots weren't nearly as good. The youngsters of the Fifth Air Force, seeing the change in tactics and sensing that the climax had been reached, struck blow after blow at the enemy. Japanese morale in the air cracked for the first time. The Allies hit harder. With the arrival of July we had secured air domination. All we had to do was to hold it. . . .

The Japs threw a lot in against the Yanks and the Aussies, but the new fighting team hit back with everything it had. For the next ten months they were to chalk up the best score against the Japanese of any army in any theatre of war in the Pacific. Victory followed victory on the ground. Every move the enemy made was halted and pushed back. It was done partly because of the tremendous courage of Allied infantrymen fighting in the rotten, mud-choked jungles, but it could never have been done without the unremitting support that came, whenever it was needed, from the skies.

New types of planes were coming out, too, and although the numerical strength of the Fifth Air Force during the times of crisis was actually less than it had been in the days of aerial shadow-boxing, it was steadily becoming a more skilful and a more homogeneous force, both for attack and defence.

The Japanese tried everything they knew to break the yoke of air domination, and they failed. They tried to establish a new pursuit base at Buna, and lost more than a hundred brand-new Zeros in the attempt without ever succeeding in using the base operationally. They tried, by sheer weight of numbers, to blast our planes from the sky, but they left their run too late. By the time they were sending over mass formations again we had brought a new pursuit into action—the Lockheed Lightning P38. At first it failed, because pilots tried to dogfight with the Zero, probably the most manoeuvrable plane in the world. Then the young Americans learned to rely on high altitude, extreme speed, diving power, and the lethal punch of a "one pass attack." In one day over Wau, Lightnings and P40s destroyed forty-one Zeros and dive-bombers without loss to themselves!

The Fifth Air Force was still outnumbered five to one, sometimes ten to one, but the Japs couldn't break the stranglehold of air power skilfully directed and courageously applied. In the first nine months of its combat history the Fifth Air Force had definitely destroyed 650 enemy combat aircraft, had damaged or possibly destroyed an additional 700, had sunk 39 warships and 42 merchantmen, and had been directly responsible for the loss of 22,000 Japanese lives. Moreover, it had finally disrupted Japan's campaign of conquest south of the Equator. All this had been done by a handful of American and Australian kids flying what was a dangerously small air task force. They had won because of their capacity to out-mancœuvre, out-think, and out-fight the best that Japan could produce.

The little army of men in helmets and flying jackets formed Australia's first line of defence—and its most important line. All Australia was becoming air-conscious, because it knew that if that line was penetrated by the aerial might of Japan a ruthless, all-conquering foe would again be stamping on the threshold of the continent.

By August the direction of Allied combat aviation, upon which so much depended, was in the hands of a new man. Lieutenant-General George Brett, first air commander of the South-west Pacific, had been given a new command. In his place the War Department had sent out Major-General (now Lieutenant-General) George Kenney. That was one of Australia's luckiest breaks. Kenney was a hard fighter who couldn't be licked because he would never admit that he was licked. He came to live with his men, eating the monotonous food, sleeping under mosquito netting in the humid tropic nights, washing out of a battered basin or an upturned steel helmet. He had the capacity of transmitting to his men his own dynamic energy and his refusal to be beaten. He never stopped thinking out new ways of beating his enemy. MacArthur once made it clear to him that every operation in the Australian theatre, by ground, air, or sea, had one objective—to push the striking power of Allied aviation closer to Japan's bases, and so closer to Tokyo. "Advance the bomber line!" was the basic order.

In an introduction to one of Charlie Edmonson's fine articles in *Fortune*, this statement appeared not long ago:

"There is no such thing as a bird's-eye view of the largest ocean in the world and of the largest theatre in the history of warfare. Tokyo is south-west across the fogs from Attu, west across an endless ocean from Pearl Harbor, north across a sea spotted with

aerodromes from Australia, New Guinea and the Solomons. India looks north-east to Tokyo across a conquered Burma, and Chunking looks east across the battlefields of six long years. From each of these different points one sees different things. From the Australia-New Guinea-Solomons area one sees, more perhaps than in any other single region, *the air*—the air as it is even now determining tactics, framing strategy, and choosing matériel and men. . . .”

Already the south-west battlefield had been a testing ground for air warfare and it had proved to those who had seen the battle that aviation could, and would eventually, defeat Japan. If numerically inferior aviation could not only hold Japan but push her back, what could not be done by an overwhelming superiority in aircraft employed with the tactical superiority already achieved? That was the question a lot of people were asking. Kenney himself told me that if he could get 1,500 to 2,000 new combat aircraft of the types he needed he could be hammering Tokyo within six months.

Global strategy, however, directed—and nobody in Australia could honestly deny the logic of the direction—that commitments in Europe were vastly more important and that Pacific battlefronts would have to fight with what they had until other developments were taken care of. Since then events in Tunisia, Sicily, and Italy have proved the magnitude and importance of the “impending developments” which were responsible for the firm refusal of Washington to agree to repeated requests from Australia for more aircraft.

It was left for Kenney to make the best of the striking power he had available. It was clear that all Australian defence depended upon aviation—as Curtin had foreseen nine years earlier—and it was fortunate for Australia that the chunky American air commander was a wizard of adaptation and improvisation, a restless thinker who would rather go to the trouble of altering his whole air tactical methods overnight than take the risk of the Japanese discovering that the Fifth Air Force was in a rut.

“This fight is one long battle of wits,” he said to me at dinner one night. “Everything depends on deception. If we had great superiority in the air we could smash through by sheer brute force. But we’re either fighting on rough parity, or, more usually, fighting on numerical inferiority. But our fliers are better and our planes are better. We have to add another ingredient to our recipe for victory. Deception. That’s a pretty tough order. Pearl Harbor and a few other stunts showed exactly what clever guys the Nips are at this sort of thing. But we can beat ’em. We have

to deceive them, mislead them, mystify them, cross them up, and then kill them. Because if we get into a groove, they'll kill our boys."

So Kenney went to work. Crooked planes were taken apart and parts used with pieces from other crooked planes to make one air-worthy machine. Civilian transports were grabbed from every commercial airline service in Australia to shift troops and stores to the battlefronts. Planes were redesigned and rearmed to carry out specially planned attacks to destroy enemy shipping. A new method of aerial attack—"skip bombing"—was developed under Kenney's direction. It didn't matter that the B17, designed as a stratosphere bomber, had to be employed as a wave-skimmer to carry out the attacks. Ships were sunk, plenty of them, and that's all that Kenney asked. The A20 and B20 medium bombers became the most lethal low-level attack planes in the world, when they were given new fire-power by Kenney and the brilliant young officers of the Fifth Air Force, who would do anything and go anywhere in order to pay the Japs back for the hundreds of their young comrades who had given their lives to make the Japanese remember Pearl Harbor.

Not satisfied with checking the Japs, Kenney threw an aerial blockade around their New Guinea bases in an attempt to starve out positions like Lae and Salamaua. The Japs did starve. Repeatedly they tried to reinforce and supply their garrisons, but every attempt ended in disaster.

It was a slow, uphill fight. In a whole year the heaviest air attack the Fifth Air Force was able to launch against Rabaul, Japan's main base south of the line, numbered thirty-one Flying Fortresses and six Australian Catalinas. In that time the greatest weight of bombs dropped on Rabaul in any one attack was sixty tons. Not much satisfaction to pilots and bombardiers who heard on the radio almost every day stories of two thousand tons of bombs dropped on Dortmund in a single night, or a thousand bombers on a sweep over Europe or the Mediterranean. The Allies in the South-west Pacific never had the strength to deliver the knockout blow, but they kept harassing their adversary with a ceaseless rain of punishing shortarm jabs. Often they made him groggy, but they could never muster the strength to follow up.

They couldn't follow up even after their supreme triumph in March of 1943, when Japan's biggest attempt to break through the Allied air blockade to relieve Lae and Salamaua failed utterly in the now-historic Battle of the Bismarck Sea. The Japs sent out twelve big transports with an escort of ten cruisers and destroyers



and 150 Zero fighters. They had another 200 bombers, dive-bombers and fighters, and more than 60 ships in reserve at Rabaul.

It was possible to get 136 American and Australian bombers and fighters into the air. For forty-eight hours they shuttled backward and forward across the cloud-capped Owen Stanleys. When the last plane came home after the last blow had been struck, the Fifth Air Force had done what no other air force in the world had succeeded in doing—it had completely annihilated a naval force by the employment of air power alone. Twenty-two ships carrying at least 15,000 men had gone to the bottom. And at the cost of one B17 and three P38s it had shot out of the sky 102 of the 150 Zeros which had formed the Japs' protective screen. That was the perfect expression of what air power could do. In forty-eight hours aviation had taken greater toll of the enemy's power than six months of jungle fighting had done.

The Japs threw more planes into the area, began a long series of raids with formations of 100, 95, 70, 100, 65, and 80 aircraft. Our biggest raid on Rabaul still consisted of thirty-seven bombers. In every attempt at interception we were still outnumbered three, four, five to one. But our pilots were good enough to give the Japs the edge in numbers and still beat them.

That is why the United States Fifth Air Force stands in my estimation as the "world's best." It has fought a bloody and uphill fight for almost a year and a half. It is still meeting the enemy with the cards stacked against it. And it is still winning, hands down.

To find the reason you don't have to go far beyond the guts and high resolution of a few hundred youngsters, most of them American, who don't know the meaning of the word "inferiority," for even a modern war of machines depends in the final analysis on the courage and determination of the men who use the machines. Mortality has been tremendous. Almost every good friend I had in the Fifth Air Force is now dead. But in dying they magnificently upheld the unspoken tradition of the most magnificent air fighting team I have ever seen—"It's worth dying if you can only take two or three of the little sonsabitches with you!"

## CREDO FOR COLONIES

THE WHOLE BUSINESS WAS SUMMED up for me in one simple sentence, a sentence so poignant and powerful that it still runs through my mind although I heard it eight months ago. It

was a sentence that could be carved in stone as an eternal reminder to those men who will have in their hands the decisions of mandates and empires and the destinies of the subject peoples of the world.

I heard it in central New Guinea, amid the lush jungle and the stinking mud of the Kokoda track. I had stopped for a few minutes to give a cigarette to a wounded Australian soldier coming down from the battlefield on a crude log stretcher which jolted on the shoulders of eight mud-daubed Papuan natives. They had placed the youngster down gently beneath a broad-leafed palm tree. The blood was brown and clotted on the bandages that swathed his chest. One of the native bearers was wiping the grime from his twisted, fever-yellowed face.

The soldier nodded his thanks for the cigarette, then looked at the ugly natives who were standing or squatting nearby, their chests heaving from the labour of handling the great unwieldy stretcher. On their flat, black faces were expressions of embarrassed but respectful consideration. The soldier had a curious expression on his own face as he turned to me and spoke the one simple sentence.

"You'd think that Christ was black, wouldn't you?" he said softly.

There were hundreds of other soldiers in that dreadful jungle campaign who must have had similar thoughts about these simple, ungainly black men who became known along 160 miles of jungle battlefield as "the fuzzy-wuzzy angels of the Owen Stanley track." For these men made Allied victory possible in one of the toughest campaigns of the Pacific War, they saved countless American and Australian lives, they gave their own lives to prove their friendship—and they did all this simply because they felt a debt of gratitude for good treatment.

War came to these Papuans with a swiftness that left them aghast and bewildered. It came through Malaya, where natives aided Japan willingly as fifth columnists because they hated what they considered the injustices of white domination. It swept through the beautiful islands of Indonesia, and again the Japanese were helped in their aggression by the natives who believed they saw in the new pattern of conquest something of freedom from white oppression, even if such oppression had been for the most part kindly and tolerant. Then the tide of war rolled on to New Guinea. And, for the first time, Japan was unable to obtain aid from the natives of a country predominantly native and supposedly subject to the harsh tyranny of the white man's rule. There was no fifth column in Papua. The Japanese war machine

came to a creaking, rumbling halt. For the first time in the white-dominated lands of the Western Pacific a subject people was unanimously supporting the white man against the invader.

It is true that the Filipinos had fought fiercely and bravely. But they were no subject race of docile, simple-living primitives. They were an intelligent, national-minded people fighting for their own land and for their own independence. The Papuans knew nothing of the artifices of war. Even their own traditional tribal feuds and head-hunting and cannibalism had been buried beneath a generation, sometimes two or three, of ordered living. Why then did these laughter-loving, childlike people come in thousands to help the white *taubada*? The answer to that question might be the answer to many of the problems that are going to vex commissions and nations when armed clashes in the Pacific give way to the sorting out of the tangle of race and sovereignty in the lands and islands where the ugly tide of Japanese domination once spread.

And that answer may lie in the fact that Australia long ago professed a Credo for Colonies and Mandates. In the New Guinea territory under its mandate and in the jungle land of Papua, which was virtually her only colony, Australia administered countless native tribes, numbering probably a million savages and partly-civilized people who lived in a tangled wilderness wilder and more primitive than almost any land on earth. Six thousand white men looked after the million natives. In Papua they had a slogan that was the fundamental of Australian administration—"Papua for the Papuans." There was no exploitation. All commercial development of Papua was based on an edict that "the utmost strictness must be given to the policy of ensuring the continuity of native life based on the village." Superstitious and traditional rites which involved sorcery, head-hunting and cannibalism were stamped out, but otherwise every tribe was encouraged to preserve its original cultural and economic pattern of life.

The basic policy was often attacked. Papua was referred to by one politician sneeringly as the "world's greatest native reservation." Commercial interests repeatedly tried to exploit the tropic land that was rich in gems and minerals, whose forests were choked with magnificent timber, whose rain-drenched hills could grow cocoa, rubber, tea, coffee, cinchona, spices, almost everything that the unbelievably rich empire of the Dutch East Indies and the peninsula of Malaya could produce. Every proposal was examined by the administration with one basic thought in mind: "How will it affect the native way of life?" The only

concession made to the people who clamoured for the exploitation of Papua's potentially enormous resources was a careful investigation by administrative officers into the maximum number of natives who could be recruited for labour work on plantations and in mines without imperilling standards of village life. They agreed upon 20,000 out of Papua's total population of 350,000. But, just to be on the safe side, they never at any time allowed even 10,000 to be recruited in a year, and then only under the strictest possible laws.

When war came to Papua in 1942 the colony had been Australia's for thirty-six years. In all that time there had been little fundamental change in the natives' way of life. They were still simple, unspoiled. They lived by agriculture and hunting and fishing. They approved of the few things the white man had added to community life—the schools and hospitals, the food supplies during drought, the regular legal sittings of touring district magistrates, the attention to sanitation and hygiene and infant welfare. Some of them, who had known the harsher, more regimented rule of the Germans when northern New Guinea was a German colony, had an added liking for the quiet, friendly Australian system. All of them approved the way in which the white *taubadas* encouraged the natives to help run their own lives by the powers given to village headmen and councillors and native police constables.

Before he died, veteran administrator Sir Hubert Murray, arch-prophet of the "Papua for the Papuans" policy, expressed doubt about the reactions of the natives if war came to New Guinea. "These natives," he said, "have, of course, only the vaguest notion of whom we are fighting against, and none at all of what we are fighting for!" Even this man, who probably knew more than any other man alive about the Papuan people, did not realize how real and deep would be their gratitude for years of friendly treatment.

In the first weeks of war in New Guinea the natives were unashamedly terror-stricken. They fled their villages, as the first bombs fell, in a blind mass of humanity that streamed to the mountain and jungle settlements, where village economies were already unbearably taxed by the privations of a year-long drought.

Former administrative men—patrol officers and district magistrates—recruited into the Australian Army, went patiently out along the tracks and over ravines to talk with the natives, to reason with them, to tell them what the war was all about. The coloured people came back, at first reluctantly and then with a

willingness that was almost eager. Within a few weeks they were paying little attention to air raids. Into their simple existence they had accepted the demands of the *negana tuari*—"the fighting time"—but their loyalty to their white masters surprised even the most hardened pro-Papuan.

The real test came after July, when the Japanese, pushing down from Buna along the one terrible track that led to Port Moresby, brought war to the Papuan jungles and to the great limestone ridges of the mighty Owen Stanley Range. Army commanders were less surprised than they should have been when hundreds of natives volunteered to keep supplies moving up the heart-breaking trail, to bring wounded back from the mountain front lines. They were less surprised simply because the natives had already given proof of their loyalty. Tiny, poverty-stricken coast villages, where a dollar was enough to support a whole family for more than a month, had voluntarily contributed hundreds of dollars to Australian war loans. Thousands of Papuans had willingly offered their services in the construction of military trails and airfields. Hundreds had enlisted in an all-native battalion to fight the white man's enemies.

Thousands of them—many coast natives unaccustomed to the terrible mountain trails and the chilling alpine mists—slaved for months on the Kokoda Trail, carrying great loads of ammunition and food along the world's worst military supply road. And then they came back with wounded on their shoulders, often taking weeks to carry one man from the battlefield to the safety of a rear hospital. During the terrible night rains they took turns sitting up with the patient, warding the rain off his face with a broad banana-leaf, washing his wounds with the tenderness of skilled nurses. They marched by day through dank swamps and steaming jungles, and always the face of the wounded man was shielded from the burning tropic sun by a great green leaf. No feature of the New Guinea campaign will be remembered with more gratitude than the courage and patience and devotion of those simple natives in those grim months. They did it, not for gain, but because of friendship and gratitude.

The Allies reacted as they should. The Papuan was treated as a friend, as a comrade-in-arms. Because the Papuan man was a grand guy, the Papuan women—many of them amazingly beautiful when young—were never molested, never treated with anything but respect. The terrible war in the jungle continued, but now the Japanese were in retreat, and much of the credit for Allied successes was given to the natives who had done so much to make victory possible.

Scores of Papuans were out with Allied patrols, fighting and dying as they fought. Many were decorated. The Allied military command insisted on giving the natives medical treatment identical with the medical treatment given to American and Australian fighting men. And as the white wooden crosses grew more numerous in Port Moresby's military cemetery it was common to see, among the flower-decorated graves lying in neat rows without discrimination, one white cross bearing the name of some Australian officer, another the name and unit of an American fighter pilot from Texas, and between the two an identical grave, the cross of which bore the simple words: "WARIA, of the Papuan Infantry Battalion. Killed in Action."

Three decades of sane colonial administration without exploitation were paying rich dividends. Of all the heterogeneous tribes, only one displayed disloyalty. This was the dreaded Orokaiva tribe, the killers and "bad pigs" of Papua, a tribe notorious for years as one always looking for trouble. But even they soon found out that Australian rule was to be preferred to Japanese.

When the Allies pushed through to the Buna plains, the Orokaivas were there to meet them. They came shamefaced and repentant, with gifts of fruit and flowers from their ravished gardens. And, most important of all, they came with their own prisoners—the Orokaiva ringleaders who had lured them into a temporary and sorry alliance with the enemy. The men had already been captured, tried, judged, and imprisoned.

Next day the Orokaivas went to work to make amends. I used to see them just behind the front lines, working from sunrise to dusk carving air strips out of the broiling kunai grass so that American and Australian transport planes could land. And when their day's work was done I would see them jog-trotting down the dusty track towards the battlefield to pick up wounded men and carry them back to the air strips before dawn.

"Papua for the Papuans" was a much-criticized policy, but it was a humane policy. The slogan of independence came not from the subject people, but from the ruling people. The Papuans have no more idea of the meaning of independence than the man in the moon. But they do have a deep-seated sense of justice and humanity, and they are prepared to make untold sacrifices to express gratitude for just and humane treatment. There must be lessons in that for other countries and for the people who will shape the destinies of colonies in years to come.

To-day tens of thousands of natives of Papua and New Guinea are playing a vital part in military operations that are inexorably pushing back the Japanese. They are working loyally for the

Allies—as they have been working for more than a year—in areas now being wrested from strong Japanese military control. They are acting as guides and fighters for Allied forces penetrating from swamp to jungle and from river-mouth to mountain range. They are aiding us to move from island to island in new offensives. They are rescuing American flying crews, forced down in the jungles, from under the very noses of the Japanese. And they are still tending the sick and wounded on the battlefields and supply lines, tending them with the kindness and affection and respect that brought from the lips of a simple Australian soldier eight months ago that superb tribute to the primitive people of a savage land:

“You’d think that Christ was black, wouldn’t you?”

## VI. LEASE-LEND IS A TWO-LANE HIGHWAY

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### ARMY OF THE ELDERLY

I NEVER KNEW OLD JOHN's real age. He had been a waiter in an old Brisbane hotel for almost as long as the place had been in existence. He was grey and slightly stooped, and he had that quiet dexterity that is the sign of a good waiter. It was something of a shock when he came to me one day and said, "I'll be leaving week after next, Mr. Johnston. I've been called up."

"Good Lord," I replied amazedly. "You're a bit old for soldiering, aren't you, John?"

"Oh, I'm not going into the Army. I've been called up for the C.C.C."

There must have been quite a combing-out of the city that week, for a fairly clean sweep was made of what was regarded as non-essential labour to obtain elderly men for work in the Civilian Construction Corps—men too old for soldiering, but fit enough to carry out essential construction work on the roads and camps and airfields that made soldiering possible for the younger men.

The C.C.C. was the newest of Australia's armies, although its members were armed with picks and shovels instead of rifles and bayonets. Its creation was the direct outcome of the arrival in Australia of the American Expeditionary Force. The Yanks landed and went to work in a hurry. They wanted plenty of things done, and they wanted them done quickly. They refused to be delayed by red tape. They wanted aerodromes for the new planes they were bringing in. They wanted new roads and better roads. They wanted new and more efficient systems of telephone and telegraph communication. They wanted new camps, new storehouses, new wharf facilities. They laid down mammoth schedules for construction work on a scale which Australia would never have considered possible two years before. The newly-arrived American engineer units were themselves working with a speed and efficiency that was astonishing, smashing the barriers of red tape and Australian casualness with charming ruthlessness.

The average Aussie looked with admiring amusement at the spectacle of diehard public servants becoming choleric and



speechless as the Yanks pushed aside their protests that "certain things couldn't be done without a memorandum being submitted," and doing the jobs without permission and sending the memorandum in later—if they thought of it! One day an American three-ton truck arrived at a new airfield. The truck was heavily laden with aircraft parts. The gates were locked. The guard outside announced that it would be impossible to obtain the keys from the man in charge until the following day. However, he added, he would send a runner to the official's home to see what could be done. When the runner returned, many hours later, the gates were twisted debris on the ground, where they had been pushed in by the truck. And the Americans were calmly bolting together the wing assembly they had brought in.

"Struth!" said the Australians. "These Yanks certainly know how to get things done!"

But it was only in minor matters that the crude effectiveness of the American policy of "Act first, ask afterwards" could be employed. In the gigantic task of preparing Australia for a war of attack or defence a properly organized system of construction was required—a system in which tens of thousands of workmen could be employed on jobs that extended the length and breadth of the continent. Curtin listened attentively to the claims of the American engineer officers and the plans of the military command. Immediately he established as a supreme body the Allied Works Council, with complete directive control over all Allied construction in the South-west Pacific. The Council immediately put into effect its plans to draft manpower into the Civilian Construction Corps. A new army of workmen was born.

Within three months the Council had 11,500 jobs on its project list. In the same period more than 100 great new airfields had been completed—one of them was twenty square miles in area—and tens of thousands of men were working on new port facilities, new storage depots and road systems, camps, hospitals, and even more airfields. New shipyards and new munitions factories were going up. All civilian building had ceased for the duration of the war, and every plumber and builder and concrete-worker and carpenter was building for the war effort. The unskilled labour for the enormous projects came from the ranks of men who were above or below the age requirements of the services, and whose normal occupations were not essential to the country's war effort. Not only the builder and the engineer, but the waiter and the street-sweeper and the small-town barber were fighting alongside the munitions worker and the soldier to prepare for the coming offensive against Japan.

In one giant stride Australia had moved years ahead technologically. Great office staffs of the new Allied Works Council had the job of allotting manpower and materials for jobs the financial requisitions for which had gone beyond five million dollars a week. The whole job was placed under the direct control of one man—Edward Theodore, newspaper-owner, former trade union organizer, a man whose shrewd financial genius had won him a fortune in the Fijian goldfields. He was given complete priority in plant and equipment. He was told he had no need to delay work to await financial approval by the Government. His job was to cut red tape and get the jobs done as soon as it was humanly possible.

Within a week complete records had been compiled of every piece of construction equipment in the country—every bulldozer, every tractor, every earth-moving device, every crane, every dragline—together with its exact location and condition. And Theodore was given the right to take any of it whenever it was needed.

Within a few more weeks 52,000 workers between thirty-five and sixty years of age were drafted into the C.C.C., where they lived in camps under exactly the same conditions as soldiers, but drew their ordinary union wages plus allowances in cases where there were special hardships and unusually arduous living conditions.

At a secret location in inland Australia an enormous airfield was required—the largest in the Australian defence system. There was nothing there but a tiny little town on the edge of the scrub, sleeping in the dust and heat of the sun-browned plains. American and Australian Air Force officers went out to inspect the site. Three months later squadrons of Boeing Flying Fortresses were bombing-up on the great runways. Thousands of men were living in the enormous camouflaged hangars and camps and workshops.

The transformation had been brought about by the C.C.C. at the cost of ten million dollars and by the work of 2,500 men, who lived in tents and crude huts while the job was being done. They moved more than 30,000 tons of earth, erected 450 permanent buildings, built 49 miles of concrete roadway within the airfield area. They did it with 250 five-ton trucks, 407 horses and carts, and 150 earth-moving machines. One of the machines needed was a dragline excavator weighing 120 tons. The nearest one was scores of miles away. It would take too much time to dismantle it and ship it to the scene of operations by rail. "Bring the damned thing overland," said the construction boss. And overland it came, travelling on its own tracks at a cruising speed of

three-quarters of a mile an hour. It lumbered on, day and night, through fields and waterways.

Waterholes in the way were filled in and then scooped out again as the dragline passed. High-tension wires which obstructed the passage of the mammoth machine were taken down and replaced.

Within a few more months Allied troops were speeding to their battle stations over 5,000 miles of new four-lane highways—equivalent to a roadway from the southernmost point of the Australian mainland to Tokyo. Every inch of the 5,000 miles was built in nine months. Three of the highways together covered 2,500 miles, through country which had been a trackless wilderness. One spanned the continent from north to south. Another went inland to link the vital areas of the whole eastern seaboard with a great highway not vulnerable to Japanese attack. Another stretched through the great deserts from the east coast to the distant west. Across plains marked only by a few two-wheel tracks gangs of men operating scoops and bulldozers pushed a smooth all-weather highway at the record rate of eighty-six miles every eight days. The 650-mile Alice Springs-Birdum trans-continental highway—the first of the great road jobs constructed—was completed in ninety days, after what the military commander described as “one of the greatest outback romances since the days of the pioneers.” Many of the workers were sixty years of age, but they worked with the other men their allotted time of sixty hours one week and seventy the next.

Plagued by flies, mosquitoes, and dust, hundreds of men slaved on the tropical road systems for months to ensure the sealing of surfaces before the wet season came in. It was a race against time, but the “Army of the Elderly” won. Four thousand of them, using the greatest collection of road-making machines ever seen in the Southern Hemisphere, did the job in seven days less than the schedule. Water was carried in tank-trucks to areas of the desert where the grey-headed labour army was on the job. At every staging camp were hospitals and medical centres to give the men all the care possible. Scores of trains carried food and materials to the nearest railhead, from which the supplies were trucked across the wilderness.

Another sixteen thousand men were working in Queensland on new wharves, new airfields, new hospitals. Wherever possible steel was replaced by Australian hardwood, for two reasons. Steel was needed for munitions, and carpenters were more easily obtained than metalworkers, most of whom were employed in Australia's hundreds of war factories. In land that was virgin

scrub and paddocks at the time of Pearl Harbor, 365 camps—the smallest to accommodate more than 500 troops—had been built by December 7, 1942. That was an average of a new army camp a day for every day that Australia had been in the war. It was a good record of achievement.

In the first year of its existence the Allied Works Council had successfully completed 1,001 huge construction jobs costing more than \$210,000,000, and was hard at work on an additional thousand equally enormous projects. It demonstrated just what could be done in a democracy when procrastination and red tape were eliminated. It showed what could be done even by an army of elderly men when the task *had* to be done. Work in the C.C.C. was compulsory. The men were drafted for it. But there were many who volunteered, and among these were hundreds of returned soldiers of the last war who had failed to pass medical examinations or age requirements for this war in the fighting services. Later, C.C.C. men were required to go to battle areas—to bombed Darwin, and war-torn Port Moresby, and malaria-ridden Milne Bay. It was decided to make it voluntary for men over the active-service age limit to serve in dangerous areas. The number of volunteers ran into thousands. . . .

The regimentation of civilian labour was an action altogether opposite to the basic principles of labour in Australia. The conscription of labour gangs was something which violated the worker's code on which so much of Australian life had been based for decades.

But Australia had accepted the spontaneous assistance of the United States in her hour of danger. And it was Australia's duty to discharge her reciprocal obligation to prepare, if necessary, every square inch of the entire continent as one vast base for the United Nations in the fight against Japan.

I travelled once in a military convoy along the great north-south continental road that is the vital central link in the Darwin-Adelaide defence hook-up. The schedule for the 650-mile trip called for arrival at destination on a Thursday at 4.20 p.m. The last truck of the 130-truck convoy came to a stop at 4.25 p.m. The oldest driver in the convoy was twenty-two, the youngest not yet nineteen. They all had a great affection for "The Track," even though there were times when their curses about a road wash-away in the "wet" would have blistered the paint off the sides of the trucks if there had been any left.

It was strange that there was very little monotony on that trip through a monotonous, timeless land. The trucks rumbled along as the hot sun poured down on the billowing dust and the

parched earth, the stunted mulga and lancewood that spread far beyond the basalt ridges, clear as crystal in this dry atmosphere. Three hundred yards from the road a man could be lost forever. One mistake about water, one slip on a compass bearing would mean terrible death. There was safety along the road, but the last vehicle in every convoy carried a special mechanic, a great drum of water, and forty-four gallons of gasoline.

The kid driver beside me yarned as we lurched and swayed toward the night staging camp.

"I used to drive a little ten-horse-power car down in Adelaide." He wrestled with the wheel as the huge truck slipped sideways in a soft patch of sand. "These things are a bit different to handle. But I wouldn't have missed this for the world, and this is my fourteenth convoy trip. Some of the blokes find the trip monotonous. I don't. There's always something new to see: sunsets and sunrises and kangaroos and wallabies and wild turkeys and dingoes, and the whirlwinds marching across the plains, and sometimes a party of black-fellows going 'walkabout' in the scrub. And then when the rains come the whole country changes overnight."

He waved a bronzed arm toward the arid plains. "Grass six foot high springs up everywhere, and every day there are different sorts of flowers. Beautiful country this, in a strange sort of way. Of course there's plenty of excitement in the wet season. This is an all-weather road, but it's an all-weather *military* road. You wouldn't get an ordinary automobile through in the wet. I've seen the trucks going down one after the other, bogged to the axles. You only have to get an inch or two off the crown of the road and down you go. There's nothing to be done. You might as well throw in the clutch and wait for a tow. I've seen the chaps working all night to free the convoys, slaving to get a truck out, only to see it go down again ten yards farther on. But somehow the convoys go through. Once we had fifty-two trucks bogged down together along a seventy-mile stretch of road. But they got through and not an ounce of freight was lost."

He spoke of other convoys along this Australian "Burma Road," each truck laden with sandbags to be emptied in bad patches so that the truck behind would stand some chance of getting through the chopped-up surface. He described the men working day after day, up to their thighs in sticky red mud. And he spoke with warm admiration of the pioneers of the inland, the men and women who had looked for a home in this desolate country, the early settlers and the men of the overland telegraph who had blazed this trail of adventure.

"On one trip," he said, "I was talking to a couple of Australian officers going north to Darwin. Way up north they had called into a pub for a drink, and they started to complain to a seventy-two-year-old woman serving them behind the bar. She answered them contemptuously in real Australian:

"'What the bloody hell have you young fellers got to complain about? I came up here sixty-five years ago on the back of a bloody bullock!'"

The staging camp was buzzing with activity when my convoy arrived that night. The talk everywhere was of trucks and repairs, of broken springs and oil changes. Under the harsh glare of flood-lights, mechanics worked through the night on every truck. A leaking radiator was hauled out, repaired, and put back again. Every vehicle was thoroughly checked, filled with gasoline, greased, and overhauled. It was long after midnight when I fell asleep, and my lullaby was the clattering noise of the machines and the throbbing of dynamos. The convoy drivers slept on the ground beside their trucks, wrapped in rough blankets and using their greatcoats for pillows.

These staging camps exist for only one purpose—to keep the convoys going. They do that by carrying out maintenance and repair work and by providing meals and rest for the men.

We drove on through the Dead Heart, through the Devil's Marbles—strange rocky phenomena that are among the weirdest and most beautiful sights in all Australia—to a desolate well in the heart of the desert, where two nineteen-year-old privates were living alone in the central Australian desolation simply to do the job of boiling water for tea for the men of every convoy that went by. These kids stayed at their lonely jobs for three months or more, with only each other to speak to in the gaps between convoys. Their only other visitors are the Stone Age aborigines who bring them boomerangs and strange carvings to polish.

They read Western pulp magazines, and catch the primitive lizards called "mountain devils" to train for pets, and carve strange ornaments from the mulga wood, and go shooting. And sometimes they just sit there thinking of home and movie theatres and girls in pretty frocks—and they know that they are dreaming hundreds of miles from the most ramshackle little township and more than a thousand miles from the nearest city. But they grinned cheerfully as they waved us good-bye and settled back into the lonely silence of the Never-Never Land.

The great convoy laden with guns and tanks and gasoline and bully beef thundered on, through strange rocky landscapes that walled the road like mighty bastions, down through the cruel

desert and the jagged basalt rises, through a land of a hundred colours and an age-old silence so profound that a truck laden with empty petrol drums can be heard twenty minutes before it even appears as a tiny speck on the farthest visible limit of the road. Down through an uninhabited land, where the kangaroos are lolloping lazily through the scrub, where Central Mount Stuart (exact geographical centre of the continent) towers over a landscape that was old and dead a million years ago, on through treeless ranges whose mica-studded flanks sparkle like a kaleidoscope in the harsh sunlight, through a big mob of cattle with their horns blaring and drivers whistling and yelling "Yippee!" like a mob of cowboys, and on into the land of gigantic anthills and forests of lancewood and ghost gums whose trunks are so close together that it is impossible to ride a horse between them.

Hidden in these forests was the terminal of the central road. The link with Darwin was by railroad, but armies of civilian workmen were sweating in Australia's worst country to push a subsidiary road through. This was the land of ravine-like river crossings where the water rises sixty feet in a night in the drenching downpours of the rainy season. There were sticky stretches of dense tropical underbrush. And there were vast areas of fine drift sand—the troops call it "bulldust"—that would make most other deserts look positively glacial.

I went through once in a fifteen-hundredweight utility truck along the original bullock track that runs beside the new highway, which was then under construction. I saw the army of labour at work at midnight. Flares were burning along a five-mile stretch of the new highway. Great tractors and graders and bulldozers were lighting up the northern forests with their headlamps. The huge, rolling clouds of dust were a bizarre orange. A pair of wild buffalo, disturbed by our coming and the noise of the tractors, crashed shatteringly through the black scrub.

Our little truck lurched and shuddered and rocked as we groped through the wild country and the almost impenetrable smokescreen of bulldust. Most of the time it seemed as if we had lost our bearings and were travelling over an unusually rocky river bed. Enviously we looked toward the new road the men were carving out of the timber only twenty-five yards to our left—a new road, properly graded, that would be passable in all weathers. A workman waved to us—a man in a flannel shirt driving a huge bulldozer that looked like a prehistoric dinosaur in the darkness.

He waved and yelled a greeting to us: "G'night. Great evenin', ain't it?"

## DIGRESSION WITHOUT APOLOGY

IN THE DAYS (NOT MANY YEARS AGO) when Australia's far north was a rip-roaring land of gold-rushes and cattle-droving, of buffalo-hunting and crocodile-shooting, there was a train satirically known as "Leaping Lena." It ran from Darwin south to Birdum, where the cattle country gave way to the stony desert rises, and often it ran north again to Darwin. The train still exists. Moreover, when Australia declared war, Leaping Lena had to be entrusted overnight with vital military movements. In fact, she became the only troop train in the Northern Territory. There was something of bitterness and irony in the fact that the first troops to travel by this archaic boiler on wheels that rightly belonged to the Smithsonian Institute renamed it "Spirit of Capricorn."

The train covered the most northerly route in Australia, the three hundred and sixty-odd miles between Darwin and Birdum, with a good deal of fuss and effort. But it did—and does—cover it! And, considering that the track runs on metal sleepers that have been untouched for more than half a century, and that the rolling stock is decades old (some of it was pensioned off twenty years ago by the Queensland Railways, a system notable in Australia for *its* antique rolling stock!), the fact that it does cover the route is something of a daily triumph.

The service is run by the Commonwealth Railways, but the dignity of the title can't stop northerners from regarding the Spirit of Capricorn as one of the best-preserved jokes of the tropics. Actually, a good deal of praise is due to the old locomotives and ramshackle carriages and battered tracks. Before war began there was one train a week. Now military demands have pepped things up so much that there is at least one a day.

The predominating feature of the extraordinary service is its vagueness. One day the manager of the railroad telephoned the commandant of an Australian camp along the route.

"Any idea what time the train is leaving Katherine?" he asked.

A few days later the orderly officer in another camp hidden in the bush received a phone call from a railway official at Darwin:

"I say, old man, have you seen our train anywhere?"

"No. Can't say I have," was the reply. "Have you lost it?"



"Well, we haven't actually lost the bloody thing. But we don't quite know where it is. Will you keep a look-out for it?"

An hour later the orderly officer rang the railway official:

"I think we've landed your train. I can't be sure, but we can see a bit of smoke over the trees, and that might be it!"

Sure enough it was. . . .

On another occasion a large number of troops—Australian infantrymen with a sprinkling of American engineers and anti-aircraft gunners—were loaded into the cattle cars (in which all military personnel is carried) at the military siding at Birdum. The train shuddered and wheezed off on its long run through the woods with the troops maintaining a concerted "baa-ing" in imitation of a flock of sheep.

There were all sorts of delays. The schedule, battered in the first fifty miles, was ripped to tatters by the time a hundred miles had been covered. The soldiers decided to act. At the next of the frequent stops, two soldiers marched up to the engine and took over the duties of the fireman and engineer.

Muscles bulged and strained as shovelful after shovelful of coal and firewood was hurled into the furnace. Steam pressure rose alarmingly. With a banshee scream from the whistle, the Spirit of Capricorn roared northward, the long string of carriages and cattle cars rolling and reeling on the narrow track. The train reached Darwin two hours ahead of time. Never before, said the oldest inhabitant, had it been in on time, let alone two hours ahead of time!

It is only recently that the train has travelled during the night. Before the war, the custom was to pull up at a convenient hotel at nightfall and resume the journey next morning. The main reason was that the engine was not fitted with a headlight, and there was a grave risk at night of charging into a wild buffalo. Drivers and firemen would often pull up on some desolate stretch of track in the wilderness and wander away for an hour or so to have a yarn with a mutual friend prospecting somewhere in the bush. Often the front section of the train would arrive at a station to find that the rear end, including the guard's van, had been left behind somewhere along the track. That still happens. Not many months ago the engine had to shunt thirty-five miles back from Pine Creek before it located the missing cars and guard's caboose. Aboard the Spirit of Capricorn, however, such incidents scarcely deserve a mention.

American troops usually found the trip full of incident and amusement on this vague, strange, casual railroad. They learned that it was a good idea to carry a bottle of Scotch or beer for the

guard. In payment for this he would regale them for the whole journey with tales of the run.

He would point out the great airfield near Bachelor which had been originally cleared from the scrub as the site of a great research farm for Government experiment in tropical agriculture.

"They worked for a couple of years and spent hundreds of thousands of dollars," said the guard. "An' the only damned thing they grew was one pumpkin—an' some bastard pinched it!"

He would tell tales of the rivers that the train crossed on immensely high bridges—the Cullen and the Katherine and the Ferguson—and would point out a big crocodile waddling sluggishly along a mud bank as the train clanked across the Ferguson.

"I remember crossin' the Cullen last wet," he would say, taking a long swing at the bottle. "We set out to make the bridge at eight o'clock in the evenin'. They told us it would be a bit risky, so we waited. At midnight there was nine feet of water over the tracks—an' the tracks are sixty-four feet above the river bed. By eight next mornin' the river 'ad dropped a bit, an' we were able to git acrost with only three inches of water on the tracks.

"It's pretty excitin' travellin' up 'ere in the wet. The rivers think nothin' of risin' fifty feet in a night, an' the grass grows four inches in a day. In the dry this is a flamin' desert, but in the wet we go through patches of grass so high that you couldn't see out of a carriage window—if we 'ad a carriage window!"

Highlight of the Darwin-Birdum run, however, is the hills not far from Pine Creek, where the fifty-year-old gold diggings of the Chinese who helped to build the railroad can still be seen. The rises are not very steep as hills go, but for the Spirit of Capricorn they are pretty stiff. On my trip betting was firm at five to two against the train doing it in fewer than three tries.

She thundered and lurched down the track, hurled herself at the grade with a fierce shriek of the whistle, roared and puffed and chugged up the slope, getting slower and slower with every turn of the wheels, came to a wheezing stop . . . and rolled backward down the hill!

Again the Spirit of Capricorn hurled herself furiously at the grade, again the panting thunder of the engine gradually subsided to an asthmatic wheeze, and again the train rolled backward, thwarted a second time.

For the third attempt the train shunted a long way back so that a better run could be taken.

She thundered up the grade, cars clattering, wheels screaming. Slower and slower and slower, while the engine strained and panted and laboured to the crest. At the top of the rise there was

a dreadful moment of suspense. She hovered, uncertain, and then, with a triumphant wail of the whistle and an exhausted snuffle from the smokestack, she rolled the few remaining feet that took her clear of the crest. The Spirit of Capricorn had made it. Triumphant she snorted and lurched and clattered down the track to Pine Creek. I handed over my dollar with pleasure. It was worth it!

## BATTLE FOR SUPPLY

IN THE UNITED STATES NEWSPAPERS of September, 1942, two widely syndicated articles appeared almost on the same day. In one, written for the Scripps-Howard chain, appeared the statement, "Australia as an offensive base simply does not add up. . . ." In the other, written originally for the *Christian Science Monitor* by Joseph Harsch, an opposite point of view was taken by a man who had just returned from Australia, but who had never been notable for giving unqualified support to Australia's claims in global strategy. Nevertheless, Harsch said, "Australia, in short, has all the raw materials for a major military base, and it is the nearest such area to Japan. From it armies can be launched to retake the islands Japan has taken. . . . Australia represents to-day the only base from which American forces are in direct constant contact with the Japanese. . . ."

These two statements were indicative of the wide schism which had developed in American informed opinion on the potentialities of Australia as a fighting ally in the war against the Axis. And the divergence of viewpoints had a pronounced effect on vital questions of supply. There were, it is true, many people in America whose eyes were turned toward the Pacific and who firmly believed that everything possible should be sent to Australia because that was the one place in all the Pacific where the Japanese were being beaten. But it was common knowledge that the official Washington view—the view upon which hinged the actual allotment and movement of American war supplies—was opposed to sending to Australia anything more than the bare replacements sufficient for a holding campaign. This view at one time was so common in military circles from top to bottom that even comparatively junior officers at stations between the source and destination of what meagre supplies were allotted to Australia took into their own hands the decision as to where supplies were

most needed! There were actual cases of aircraft which had been sent to Australia from the United States being taken over by air commands at Pacific areas on the trip across. There were planes that finally arrived in Australia stripped of certain essential instruments by men at staging bases who had needed such instruments for replacements in their own machines.

These were small and isolated incidents that merely served to show the drift of opinion. Reasons for the drift away from the strategical significance of Australia as an Allied base were varied and were never 100 per cent. accurate. They went as far, at one time, as to suggest that the War Department would not allot supplies to Australia because they were chagrined at the amount of publicity that General MacArthur had received!

The result of all these things was to create a confused picture of Australia's part in the United Nations war effort. Misconceptions appeared every day in newspapers and magazines, not only in the United States and Great Britain, but even in Australia. Australians, trying to correct misapprehensions, often blundered into print with half-baked statements and further confused the issue.

Australia's repeated requests for additional supply were made for a simple military reason—the desire to keep fighting where her forces were committed, against the second strongest partner in the Axis, whom nobody else was hitting at that time on any comparable scale. And that was plain military common sense.

Everybody knew that supply—particularly aircraft—would win the Battle of the Pacific eventually. In the final analysis it would be a struggle between the munitions workers of the United States and the slave labour of the Japanese armament factories. Nobody was in very much doubt as to who would win the battle. The United States would forge the massive steel spearhead of victory in its labyrinths of furnaces and machine-shops and assembly lines. The fighting men of the United Nations, on the land, in the air, on the sea, would merely carry that spearhead and plunge it into the heart of Oriental aggression. But other facts were equally clear.

Every day that Japan was allowed to consolidate and exploit the estimable wealth of its newly-won tropical empire, meant additional production, more planes and guns and tanks for us to destroy.

Every new airfield and submarine base that the Japanese were permitted to establish would be another obstacle for our men to smash down at some vague period in the future.

In the front-line arc where battle was being joined the Japanese already had sixty-seven bases opposed to nineteen Allied bases!

There were indications that the much-publicized "scorched earth policy" applied before the conquest of Indonesia had not been carried out very effectively, and the Japanese were already shipping home vast quantities of the raw materials they so sorely needed to keep their military machine turning over.

The battle zone of the South-west Pacific was the first theatre of war where the tide had turned against the enemy. For the first time the Japanese had run up against something they could not crush. They were not only held. They were beaten back.

Those were some of the basic reasons why Curtin and MacArthur and Australians and Americans fighting in the Australian theatre asked for additional supply. All elementary principles of military lore demanded that this was the time and the place to strike at Japan. Make your long-term plans for final death-blows at the heart of Tokyo from Asia or the Aleutians or by sea from Pearl Harbor by all means. But in the meantime, hit the Jap where he is being hurt most, hit him with everything you have, make every blow harder than the preceding one, smash down his guard when he is groggy and beat him back into the corner.

To do that you have to have the strength to press home your advantage. You have to have supply—aircraft, ships, tanks, guns. For the boxing ring analogy ends when you envisage a war of metal and machines.

There is no doubt that MacArthur saw, perhaps for the first time, the clear pattern of conquest after that test-tube war in New Guinea. Perhaps he was too enthusiastic in his pleas for more of the sinews of war. There is still a cloak of secrecy about the supply problems of that ticklish period. Perhaps the demand for American aircraft was out of all proportion to the supply. The staggering production figures which were released from time to time were misleading because they included training aircraft and certain other total-bolstering factors. There was, of course, the immense commitments for the great North African and Italian operations, for which logistical details had already been planned. There was the allocation to Britain of aircraft for the mass aerial bombardment of Hitler's fortress. There were requests piling in from fronts or potential fronts in Burma, Russia, China, Alaska, the Aleutians.

Whatever the reasons, Australian requests for additional supply were shelved. It was to be months before Australian allotments were increased; not until after Foreign Minister Evatt, George Kenney, and other high-ranking American officers had visited Washington personally to urge the claims of the South-west Pacific. Australians merely shrugged their shoulders and went on

fighting with nothing much more than a mild resignation. There wasn't anything that could be done about it, was the general attitude.

The only thing that Australians, as a whole, resented were any suggestions—and even these were being toned down—that they were not pulling their weight. People spoke about the enormous quantities of war materials that America was supplying to Australia under Lease-Lend. But most Australians, digging deeper into their pockets to meet the heaviest taxation in the British Commonwealth of Nations, realized that lease-lend was a two-lane highway.

Taxation exemptions had been wiped out for the duration. The lowest incomes in the country paid 2.5 per cent. and taxation rose to 92.5 per cent. on incomes of more than \$16,000 a year. By June, 1943, the war had already cost Australia \$3,600,000,000, and the budget commitments for 1943-1944 would bring the total to \$5,500,000,000. Striking an average through the country, every person was paying \$56 in direct taxation and \$42 in indirect taxation. Direct taxation had *increased by 900 per cent.* since war began! War expenditure in 1943-1944 was at the rate of \$335.00 per head.

A good deal of this money went into a system known as "reciprocal Lease-Lend," in which every one of Australia's 7,000,000 people was asked to contribute to the common cause. American planes were in Australian skies, American troops had taken and held Guadalcanal and had thus largely helped to turn the tide of invasion away from Australia, American warships were keeping the Pacific sea lanes open, American troops were fighting in New Guinea, American merchantmen were taking bombs and guns and supplies to the outer bastions across the Coral Sea.

It is impossible to express in print the deepness of the gratitude Australia had for America and the Americans. She was repaying that aid at huge money cost.

In the year 1942 Australia spent on reciprocal Lease-Lend a sum of \$200,000,000. In 1943 Australia's contribution was set at \$350,000,000—one-sixth of the country's total war expenditure.

The people who suffered were the Australian civilians. It was Edward Stettinus, Jr., Lease-Lend administrator in Washington, who said: "Australia now supplies the greater part of the food rations of the United States armed forces there. Under reciprocal aid, they are receiving milk, beef, pork, lamb, fresh fruits and vegetables, most of their field rations as well as their canned meat and vegetables. These supplies take a sizable share of the total

food production, and the Australian people are going short of many things to supply our troops."

Since then Australia has taken over much of the supply of food, and even munitions and equipment, to American troops in the Solomons, New Caledonia, New Hebrides, and other island outposts. In addition, thousands of trucks and vehicles, airfields, port facilities, barracks, uniforms, and weapons are being supplied to the Americans. Many ships have been handed over to the United States, and others are being built.

Australia's greatest and most modern hospital was handed over to the Americans the day it was completed, despite an acute shortage of civilian hospitals. All civilian travel between states, whether by car, rail, air, or sea, was made illegal so that the maximum facilities would be available to the Americans and Australians in the service for swift and comfortable movement. To the end of April, 1943, the troops of America received from Australia quantities in excess of 50,000,000 pounds of meat, 50,000,000 pounds of vegetables and fruit, 40,000,000 pounds of bread, cookies, and biscuits, and 16,000,000 pounds of emergency food ration, to name but a few of the commodities.

They received 5,000,000 articles of clothing, including uniforms, shirts, socks, shoes, woollen clothing. They received all the tyres needed for their vehicles.

There was a constant stream of fighting material coming to Australia from America. Tanks, planes, and guns made up more than half of the stream. The rest of it included raw cotton, tinplate, petroleum, motor trucks, railway rolling stock, lubricating oils, and machine tools.

Australia was doing its best to repay the debt. When MacArthur was still holding out in the Philippines, Australia's reciprocal Lease-Lend began shipments of food which were sent through the Japanese blockade to the troops on beleaguered Bataan. It has progressed a great deal since then. Together with New Zealand, Australia is turning over to the United States as much meat as the United States sends to Britain and Russia. Australia's wool clip went almost entirely into the manufacture of military uniforms. Candy was forbidden to Australian civilians so that it could be produced as an essential foodstuff for United States soldiers. Civilian footwear had first been rationed so that Australia could send 2,000,000 pairs of boots to India for native troops. It is still rationed, so that American and Australian troops can get boots when they need them.

For the first time since Governor Phillip's foundling settlement near the present site of Sydney went on starvation rations of salt

pork and rice in 1790 there is now a shortage of food in Australia—in the land which in peacetime had the greatest *per capita* food supply in the world. Butter and cheese were put on the ration list as exports of butter and cheese to Britain were increased. You do not need points for canned food in Australia, because if you are a civilian you can't get canned food. Nor can you get citrus fruits, dried fruits, crackers, pork products, tomatoes, chocolate, rice, and many other foods. You can buy very few clothes.

Australia's reciprocal aid obligations are to provide food, equipment, clothing, ammunition, stores, transport, strategic works, and general services to United States forces in the Australian and adjacent theatres of war to the limit of her physical resources. These are the obligations that have to be honoured at the expense of the civilian population and its living standards. There are many foods removed from the lists of those available for civilian consumption. There is not a single needed commodity that does not still exist on the ration scale of the soldiers.

And, in New Guinea last December, I saw a little incident that reflected the new order of austerity on the home front. A young Australian soldier was in his tent struggling to pack a great heap of packages—toothpaste, canned pineapple, razor blades, condensed milk, talcum powder, canned salmon, tobacco, cigarettes, chocolate.

"I bought 'em at the canteen," he said to me. "I'm making up a Christmas hamper for the folks back in Sydney. They can't get any of this sort of stuff."

He tightened the string with his teeth, looked up, and added quite seriously, "You know, the civilians are having the tough end of this war."



## VII. FORMULA FOR VICTORY

26

### KILL OR BE KILLED

IT IS INTERESTING THAT WE HAVE now begun to use the word *north* in reference to Pacific fighting. So far, in twenty months of the war in that theatre, actions have always been *south* of something—south of some island or jungle strip that we have been trying to defend.

Now we are moving north away from Australia—north to the East. Curtin has publicly announced that the danger of an Australian invasion has disappeared, probably never to return again. For the first time, along the whole Pacific line, we are on the offensive; the Japanese are fighting desperately to hold their own scattered positions. The tide of war has turned.

There is still a long fight ahead before even the Australian theatre is cleansed of the Japanese menace. But there are many signs to indicate that the Japanese know that they, too, are sharing with their other Axis partners the disillusionment of fighting democracies aroused and geared to total war. The smug, sneering note of Nipponese invincibility has disappeared from Tokyo Radio's propaganda and has been replaced by grim warnings and defensive explanations to puppet governments. In five months there has not been a single aggressive Japanese operation, even on a local scale, that has not been beaten back. On the one front where battle is constant and close—the South Pacific—Japan now realizes that she has not only lost tactical air superiority, but numerical superiority also.

The disciples of the swift, lightning warfare of *den giki sen* have failed to achieve the fruits of victory dictated by short-term policies. The democracies are still planning their long-term programme, but at last it is paying dividends, and they see—as the Japanese see—that victory is inevitable. It will be hastened with every week of fighting, because the enemy is now not fighting as cleverly, as stubbornly, or as courageously as he was a year ago. And he knows that the term "Japanese-occupied territory" is a loose one. Most of his occupation is as tenuous as was the Allied grip on those same countries and islands when the Nipponese

flood of conquest first poured southward. And we shall soon be able to drive northward with a striking power immeasurably greater than Japan was able to employ in the days when fear and doubt stalked the Pacific outposts.

Dispatches still talk of yard-by-yard advances in the jungles of the Solomons and New Guinea. That doesn't mean that the whole Pacific war must be fought like that. It might take a month to conquer a thousand yards of jungle to seize an airfield. But once that airfield is seized it may mean that four hundred miles of territory becomes ours, because it is under the domination of our aviation. That is why our troops are closing the pincers round Munda airfield, on New Georgia.<sup>1</sup> When mopping up is completed it means that we have lopped off the Japanese left flank on a 3,000-miles defence line. When that happens at least one-third of the entire Japanese line is under our domination. The Japs know that, and that is why it is so significant that they are not fighting so well for Munda as they did for Buna nine months ago. Their morale is not so good as it was, because even the bestial Japanese peasant-soldier can see the inevitable. It is shown to him the simple way. A year ago he laughed uproariously at the sight of swarms of Japanese bombers pulverizing almost-undefended American positions and British garrisons and Australian outposts. Now he sees his own planes coming down in flaming wreckage by the score, and he cowers in his foxhole while great formations of American bombers rain high explosives and incendiaries on his own positions. For fourteen desperate months the largest single mass-bomber formation we could send over his main South Pacific bases was thirty-seven planes. Now we are hammering his bases regularly with one-hundred-plane formations, and even larger striking forces.

There are two great battles against Japan. The first is the battle for supply. The second, utterly dependent upon the first, is the battle for territory. It looks as if we have won the first. Earlier, the trump cards were held by Japan. Her plan of amphibious warfare was a sound and clever one. Despite the apparent speed of her conquests, she did not advance with seven-league boots. Her advances were closely synchronized with the range of her pursuit planes. She hopped from country to country and from island to island with swift certainty, but she never moved beyond the range of the fighter planes that would cover her future operations. From Japan to the Mandated Islands she had an unbroken chain of stepping-stone bases. She quickly and ruthlessly acquired an additional string of stepping stones linking the Mandated Islands

<sup>1</sup> Munda fell to the Americans early in August of 1943.

with her most far-flung battle lines. Her fleet of aircraft-carriers and plane-tenders—at the outbreak of the Pacific War the biggest of any nation—was often used to ferry combat aviation. But even her pursuits, because of her chain of bases, could fly all the way from Japanese factories to the most distant Pacific fighting fronts. The Allied artery of supply to Australia, focal point of resistance against Japan, went through a great expanse of islandless sea. Even heavy bombers had to carry reserve gasoline tanks to enable them to fly to the combat areas. Our pursuits and dive-bombers had to be ferried by aircraft carriers or sent, crated, in merchantmen to a suitable base where they were unshipped and re-assembled. It was a long and tedious process. The Japanese had an enormous edge on us there.

Eventually we beat them on production. Tokyo Radio admitted that Japanese factories could not even attempt to match United States production. There is no country in the world that can. America to-day turns out infinitely more planes than all the factories of Germany, Italy, Occupied Europe, and Japan put together. So does Britain. So does Russia.

The missions to Washington of General Kenney and Dr. Evatt bore fruit. Australia has won its share in the battle for supply. And the United Nations forces are on the move . . . this time to the northward. The Yanks have pushed from the South Solomons to the Central Solomons. The islands north of Papua have been seized. Seasoned American jungle fighters of the magnificent United States Forty-first Division have landed at Nassau Bay and struck at Salamaua—already under artillery fire from the hardy Australian force which has pushed all the way from central New Guinea to the north coast. American paratroops and Australian infantry are hammering Lae.<sup>1</sup>

All these operations are under the supreme operational command of General Douglas MacArthur—final testimony to the value of Australia as a major Allied offensive base for operations against Japan.

To-day two great air striking forces are operating in harmony in the Australian theatre. The United States Fifth Air Force is stronger than it has ever been. The operational strength of the Royal Australian Air Force has been increased by 60 per cent. The R.A.A.F., in fact, has more planes in the air than the Fifth Air Force. Of course, that is only a quantitative superiority, for the great Fortresses and Liberators are still flown by the Ameri-

<sup>1</sup> Salamaua, Lae, and Finschaven fell to Australian troops in September, 1943.

cans. There is heavier punching ahead, and we shall be doing most of the punching. The records of both air forces in the days of struggle and adversity are sufficient auguries for the future. The Americans are flying the planes that have proved immeasurably superior to those of the Japanese. The Australians are flying American-built fighters, American-built bombers, American-built Vultee Vengeance dive-bombers, British-built Beaufighters and Spitfires, Australian-built fighters and bombers and Army co-operation planes. The Dutch are flying American-built B25s, the greatest killers of all medium bombers in the Pacific.

Moreover, the Australian arsenal is at last in full productive stride. Reciprocal Lease-Lend has been greatly expanded from the days when it was planned to supply the Americans with food and clothing and construction facilities. Now it includes weapons—artillery, anti-tank guns, small arms, ammunition, shells, bombs.

The year 1942 saw intense and bloody fighting. Every fight was a victory, but each victory was paid for in blood, for this war in the Pacific is a war in which you must kill or be killed. The long sequence of Japanese reverses stands to-day as a tribute to the superiority of the Allied fighting men over the Japanese—Coral Sea, Midway, Milne Bay, the Owen Stanleys, Buna, Wau, Guadalcanal, the Solomons, New Georgia, Munda, Salamaua, the Bismarck Sea, Lae. Americans and Australians have died for these victories, but the Japanese death roll has been so much higher. . . .

In most of the actions the intensity of the fighting, however, was out of all proportion to the relatively small bodies of troops in contact with the enemy. The past has been invaluable to the present and the future. The very fact that so much was done by so few meant that the Australian munitions industry had a whole year in which to build up an enormous stockpile of vital weapons and munitions that would be needed in the greater battles ahead. That is important to American and Australian armies. The earlier sections of this book will give ample evidence of how much it means to supply-starved Australian fighting men. But it is also vital to the wider calculations of General MacArthur. Every shell or case of small-arms ammunition that goes to the United States Army from Australian war factories means just that much saved in vital shipping space. It means that we have moved another step in the direction of the Australian war ambition—which is to chop seven thousand miles of supply problem from the strategy of the combined chiefs of staff in Washington.

"Give us the tools and we shall do the job!" has been the cry of the democratic fighting man in many countries since this war

began. And that is what democracy is doing at last. We are finally pricking the bubble of totalitarian regimentation of manpower for war. Man for man, the fighter who lives in any land where the Four Freedoms are something more than political clichés is a tougher and more redoubtable adversary than the heel-clicking, jackbooted fanatic who worships pagan gods and customs and who lives by the standards of medieval barbarism. The Axis, you will notice, doesn't talk any longer about "degenerate democracy." It's a year since Japan sneeringly scoffed at "the undeniable fact that the once stout heart of America has been softened in the crucible of decadence and sex-worship and soft living." The Japanese planes no longer drop to American troops carefully-printed "surrender cards" which carry pictures of nude geisha girls in indescribably lewd postures and the tempting offer, "Stop fighting and we will give you this!" The Japanese know at last that they are up against resolute and implacable fighters.

In an earlier section of this book I examined, from the point of view of the Australian theatre, the reactions of newly-arrived American troops, the way they fitted into the Australian scene, the things they saw and the things they did when they were making their final preparations for warfare. It is possible now to examine their reactions in battle, to compare them in the heat of warfare with Australian comrades-in-arms and their enemies.

In no other campaigns of this war, possibly in none in any war, has there been fighting so full of fury and cold-blooded hatred and primitive savagery as in those bloody clashes in the jungles of the South Pacific battlefronts that stretched from New Guinea to the Solomons. No quarter was asked, none given. Men died in the darkness when a knife was drawn across their throats by an unseen foe. Men were strangled to death. Men died as they charged with fixed bayonets against hidden machine-gun posts. Men slept for weeks in foot-deep mud, drenched to the skin by the cold, sweeping rains of the tropical mountain passes; slept while the giant jungle rats nibbled clumps out of their hair. Men lived for months on starvation rations and in incredible filth, and they died of terrible tropical diseases.

Those who came back were emaciated and their eyes were lined and hollow. There were a few whose brains snapped under the horrors and privations of a campaign in which the nadir of human existence was reached. Tunis, Sicily, the Western Desert were great testing grounds for the new armies of the United States. Here was war on the grand scale, awesome and spectacular. But in none of those great battles was there anything to compare with the relatively tiny jungle clashes of the Pacific for

horror and suspense and the utmost strain on the brains and bodies of men. In the jungles death was, and is, the common denominator. . . .

It was into this warfare that the young Americans, fresh from Australian cities, were thrown at a time of acute crisis. The two American infantry divisions which first saw action were National Guard divisions—the Thirty-second, from Michigan, and the Forty-first, from Oregon. The Michigan boys spearheaded the attack on Buna. Seasoned Australian troops who had fought for more than two years in some of the fiercest battles of the war were hard-pressed, fighting with tightened jaws for weeks to wrest from the Japanese a few square yards of ground, suffering enormous casualties. The enemy had strong defence lines which he had taken months to prepare. The whole battlefield was honeycombed with Japanese foxholes and concealed weapon-pits—and the Japs were staying to the last man, to die in their holes and to take as many Allied soldiers with them as they could.

Some of the Americans were flown in by air for the attack. One regiment marched across the great alpine spine of New Guinea to reach the heat-drenched plain on which the final Papuan battle was to be fought. They went into action, laughing and confident. There was bad psychology somewhere. They had been told that there would be not much more to it than to walk into Buna. It took them two weeks to recover from the shock when they met the strongly-entrenched Japanese who were fighting stubbornly and cruelly for every inch of ground.

In those two weeks the Americans did not fight well. It was not the fault of the troops. Some of their officers were good, but some were bad. One lesson of war was written in blood up there in the clattering roar of battle; political appointments to military commands are not always wise. Moreover, the boys were thrown into a fierce battle without adequate training for that type of fighting, without adequate leadership, without even the right sort of equipment. But the material was good. There were a few of their own officers who accused the Americans of faint-heartedness, but it was a false accusation. They were not afraid. They were merely bewildered. Their staunchest defenders, when accusations were made, were the Australian troops from the best and most battle-seasoned divisions of the Australia Imperial Force.

I remember one night just behind the front line. That morning an American attack had been scheduled, but it had failed. The night was loud with the roar of small-arms fire. I was sitting with an Australian captain and an American major, who was apologizing for the fact that his men were responsible for the failure.

"Good God, man," said the Australian, "you must be reasonable. Those kids are good, make no mistake about that! My fellows have fought nine battles. This is by far the toughest of the lot. My best battalion started off this show 680 strong. To-day it has only two officers and twenty-one men left in action. And yet your Americans have been given their first taste of battle in an action as tough as this one. And most of them are only kids. My fellows are all volunteers. Their first action was against Italians at Bardia. And I doubt if they were any better, in a much easier fight, than your men have been in this one. But those same fellows would make a bayonet charge into hell now if you asked them to. And I bet your division will be as good as any in the world when it gets over its growing pains."

He was right. The American division was reorganized. Some of its officers were replaced by men who had more knowledge of jungle fighting. Napoleon once said that there were no bad soldiers, only bad officers. There were Australian units, too, in the New Guinea campaign to whom the truth of that statement applied. Significantly, they also were in action for the first time. The Thirty-second attacked again, stormed down the Japanese defences and, with the Australians, annihilated the Japanese Army to a man. After the campaign was over it was General Eichelberger, commander of the Americans and their severest critic, who said, "I feel that the Thirty-second Division will become the best fighting division in the United States Army!" The Forty-first Division, which only came into action in the final stage of the Buna campaign, had learned its lesson and fought splendidly from the outset. Later it was employed to garrison Buna and to conduct the mopping-up operations that extended along the entire north coast as far as the impassable swamps beyond Morobe. The same troops then carried out the successful landing at Nassau Bay, and combined with the Australians advancing from the inland jungles on Salamaua.

Australian and American troops are fine allies for hard combat operations after the preliminary toughening processes have been completed. I imagine neither is quite as good as the British Tommy at defensive, back-to-the-wall fighting, but each is possibly better at aggressive, shock attack fighting. The Australian, whose favourite attacking weapon is the bayonet, is rather more of an individualistic fighter, and his disregard for danger is more reckless. The American—expert with such weapons as the machine gun, sub-machine gun, and mortar—is at his best in a specially-planned, co-ordinated attack that culminates in a pulverizing smash-through behind artillery barrage. At the

moment the Australian has a better consciousness of air-ground co-ordination—probably because of his longer battle experience—but there is no doubt that the air-minded American troops are rapidly becoming the world's best at air co-operation with ground movement.

The American has no peer in any army at air transportation, and only the British are his rivals in amphibious landing work. American engineer units are unsurpassed in carrying out all the duties of planning and construction that keep an army fighting.

It did not take many weeks to prove that either the American or the Australian, man for man, was a very much better fighter than the Japanese, even in terrain that the Jap himself had selected for combat. Having seen the Japanese soldier in action at times when he has really been fighting, I still believe that he was overrated as a soldier. In the earlier Pacific actions he won a worldwide reputation for skill and fanatical courage, but it was a case of the man who looks so much better than he really is because the opposition isn't tough. Against really determined fighters the Japanese was a different proposition. Deterioration in the calibre of the Japanese fighting man in the last year is not just a matter of wishful thinking. I have seen him in action under many conditions. It is true that even now, when his morale and spirit and skill are not as good as they used to be, he will stay in his foxhole and resist until he is dead. But this rarely, if ever, has anything to do with his alleged fanatical patriotism or Emperor-worship or *bushido*. It is simply that he is incapable of thinking the problem out for himself. Many of the Japanese soldiers I have seen have been primitive, oxen-like clods with dulled eyes and foreheads an inch high. They have stayed at their positions and died simply because they have been told to do so, and they haven't the intelligence to think for themselves. I am referring now, of course, to the enlisted man. The Japanese officer is usually courageous and intelligent, but here again we have a fighter who lacks the resource and initiative of the Allied soldier. He fights well according to the book of rules, but when something happens that has not been set down in the book he easily becomes rattled.

It was in jungle fighting that the Japanese—specially trained for tropical operations on the island of Formosa—was thought to be unparalleled. Many of his early tropical victories were achieved not so much by skill of arms as by our belief that he was unbeatable in that sort of terrain. He had us licked psychologically before a shot was fired.

It took about a week of fighting in the jungle to explode the myth of Nipponese invincibility. Cunning, stealth, treachery



were his three best weapons. He employed them to carry out, roughly, six standard tricks of jungle fighting. It took a week for the Yanks and Aussies to learn the six standard tricks. In another week they had invented twenty new tricks of their own. They used all twenty-six against the Jap. He proved utterly incapable of finding adequate counter-measures, went through his book-learned warfare again and again from Trick No. 1 to Trick No. 6, and when he found that it got him nowhere he either gave up and ran or dug himself a hole in the ground and stayed there apathetically to die.

It was much the same with the so-called "linguistic abilities" of the Jap. In any jungle action Japanese voices would be heard all around at night crying out phrases in English. The Allies, after they had discovered the ruse, reacted either with irritation at the fact that they were being kept awake at night, or with hilarious amusement at what was undoubtedly a comic *obligato* to war. It was later discovered that many of the night choristers didn't have the faintest idea what they were saying. They had been taught, parrot-like, a phrase such as, "Show a light, Bill" or "Where's the sergeant?" or "Come this way, bud!" and to them it was merely a group of certain phonetically-taught sounds that they cried out into the night, hour after hour, without the slightest knowledge of what they meant.

Any American or Australian soldier I have ever met, if he has actually been in action against the Japanese, hasn't the slightest doubt about his superiority over the Japanese. Nor has he much doubt that Japanese resistance will crumple fairly rapidly when real pressure is applied by the United Nations. And don't forget that we haven't really started to hit Japan yet.

Before concluding this chapter there is one subject that has produced an enormous amount of comment and discussion in Australia—that is the alleged "softening influence" of the American way of life. Mostly, it seems to worry American officers of field rank and over. After the New Guinea campaign there was a question asked again and again wherever American officers gathered. It was, "Do you think that our fellows are too spoiled in their comfortable way of life to make good fighters in a modern war?" The question was applied almost exclusively to the draft army, and was never raised in connection with the United States volunteer forces. There was, it is true, a tendency in the early stages of oversea activity by sections of the A.E.F. to think too much about supplies of Coca-Cola and of soda fountains.

The American way of life, for many millions, is just about the best expression of civilization in the world to-day. It is equally

true that there has been more pampering of the country's youth in the United States than in most other countries. The result is that the transitional stage which takes the draftee from his Connecticut village or his Midwestern city to the primitive squalor of the forward battle line is probably longer and harder than for the young men of most other countries. But softness is evident only if the young American meets serious trouble *before* he has fully covered the transitional stage, before he has re-oriented himself both mentally and physically to the demands of kill-or-be-killed conflict. Once he has covered the transitional stage, once he has realized that there are primitive fundamentals more important than Coca-Cola and a good supply of cigarettes, and chocolate ices and ice cubes in highballs, once he has done these things he becomes a redoubtable fighter, second to none in the world. It's just that he has farther to go to get there.

This is no indictment of the American fighting man. The world will be a better place, perhaps a place where there will be no room for war, when everybody has sufficient comfort and happiness and well-being to make him want not to fight. One American sergeant in Australia once said to me: "There are two stages in the average doughboy's psychology of war. In the beginning he is still soft. He doesn't want to fight because he's enjoying a life he loves and he doesn't want to lose it. Then he becomes tough and he begins to realize what it's all about. And then he fights like hell because he enjoys a life he loves and he doesn't want to lose it—so he clenches his teeth and goes out to kill the man who's trying to rob him and all his people of that way of life."

I saw part of an American regiment going into action for the first time against strong Japanese positions some months ago. The first attack had been repulsed with heavy American casualties. The second formation was strung along the track waiting for the order to move up. Most of the kids looked terrified: Many held their heads in their hands. A few were weeping—probably from the nervous strain. I saw the same unit making an assault a week later. You would never have believed that you were looking at the same men. Their faces were iron, their wrists steel. The only expression in every face was a mixture of hatred and determination. They were tough. No man showed a trace of fear in the final charge against roaring machine guns that breached the whole Japanese line. They attacked bravely and they killed coldly. The last adjective that could be applied to these men would be "soft!"

## THE BOTTOM OF THE BARREL

IT WAS AT THE END of July that President Roosevelt and Winston Churchill, conferring in Washington for the first time since the famous Casablanca meeting, made public announcement that the war in the Pacific would be prosecuted with the same vigour as the war in Europe. It was a statement of vital importance to Australia, which for fifteen months, almost unaided, had been a major trustee of the United Nations cause in the fight against Japan.

Curtin, scarcely able to conceal his jubilation, said that the Roosevelt-Churchill conclusions had shown real appreciation of the position taken by Australia in the struggles for supply and recognition in the global picture. He amplified his statement:

"As a consequence of the advocacy of the 'Defeat Hitler First' policy public opinion was being lulled into a lack of realization of Japan's strength, and of the real extent of her great conquest. It also failed to appreciate that Japan's potential offensive power was becoming a threat to the whole world. It was even menacing the very basis of global strategy itself by failing to provide forces to prevent Japan's consolidating her conquest. Judged by the broadest world view, the influence of this strategy was making it possible for Japan to use Germany to fight a delaying action for her, so that Japan might acquire an invincible defence position. Because of her key position in the Pacific, Australia has sought to arouse public opinion to the dangers of its own drift, and to show the dangerous fallacy of the hostile opposition to the vigorous prosecution of the war in that region. The discussions [between Roosevelt and Churchill and the combined chiefs of staff] which have centred round this point of view have absolutely and completely supported the contentions of the Australian Government."

Australia, almost overnight, became an entirely different factor in the Second World War. The continent that had been fighting to hold its forward defences, that had been fighting at one stage for its own survival, had suddenly become a great base for offensive operations. The stream of American war materials crossing the Pacific was greatly increased. MacArthur was given at least some of the tools which he had expected would come to him fifteen months before. Along the whole of the 3,000-mile Japanese arc of defence-offence that stretched from the Banda Sea to Kula

Gulf the enemy was utterly on the defensive. The Allies began to push forward. Great areas of the South Pacific island labyrinth came under the domination of our aviation sweeps. Bombs fell on Sourabaya and Macassar, and distant Balikpapan, fell in ever-increasing quantities on Rabaul. Vast areas of the tropic seas that the Imperial Nippon Navy had controlled undisturbed for eighteen months suddenly became patrol areas for Flying Fortresses and Liberators and Catalinas.

It was true that the march back was only beginning. The tropic seas still weren't ours. But they were no longer Japan's.

More and more heavy bombers—and the heavy bomber is king of the Pacific—were pushed into combat service. The crews of those planes had a gigantic task, a task scarcely understood in this country. Ordinary routine flights on armed reconnaissance covered great distances. An ordinary flight out there would compare to a flight from Britain to the toe of Italy and back home again; a routine bombing mission involved distances greater than that from London to Namsos and back again. The Japanese were working night and day to establish new reserve bases as they saw their existing bases crumbling or imperilled. The Allied offensive operations were small shows according to the standards of the Russian front and the Mediterranean and the bombardment of Europe. They did not represent even a fraction of the potential that would eventually be turned against Japan. But the future most have been as clear to the Japanese as to the American and Australian fighting men who at last had seen the turning of the tide.

In Australia, with the threat of invasion finally removed, there was no relaxation of effort. Austerity was still the key word in the lives of rich and poor alike. Australia was fulfilling Evatt's promises. She no longer had to fight for her own security, but she went on fighting now, and with a strength that increased daily, for unrelenting and continued insecurity for Japan.

The barrel of Australia's seriously limited manpower had been scraped clean. In every city street a young man in civilian clothes was something of an oddity. The civilian automobile had been pushed off the highways by the great streams of military trucks in their dull camouflage. Scarcely a family in the entire continent had not felt the touch of war. There were sons and fathers and husbands and brothers in the fighting services. There were tens of thousands of families who had endured the more tragic aspects of war. Their men had been killed or were still in prison camps. There were many wives and mothers who for eighteen months had been waiting for some clue, for some letter, for some telegram,

that would finally dispel the awful suspense of that one word, "Missing." Every military hospital was crowded with casualties. In every city there were hundreds of sun-tanned youngsters with cheerful faces who were still embarrassed by the sympathetic, pitying glances of passers-by at the stumps of their amputated arms and legs.

Manpower authorities had gone through the reserved occupations again and again to get more men into uniform. Now the bottom of the barrel had been scraped. Even the draft-dodgers were all in uniform, if they were fit to be in uniform. Night-clubs and dance-halls and bar parlours had been raided so that investigation could be made of every young man and woman still in civilian clothes. The most exclusive clubs in Sydney and Melbourne were combed. Wealth and position provided no exemption from war service, either for women or men.

More than 40,000 young Australian women were in the armed service auxiliaries. Many were manning guns and predictors in areas that had been targets for Japanese bombers. Hundreds were serving as nurses in battle areas. Thousands of others were called up and given the choice of compulsory fighting service or compulsory civilian service. More than a quarter of a million new women workers had gone into factories engaged in war production. Even the women who had domestic ties which prevented them from serving found every moment of their lives dictated by the exigencies of the new way of life.

Clothes rationing limited every woman's wardrobe to a yearly purchase of: one coat, one winter dress, one summer dress, two shirtwaists, one sweater, one skirt, three pairs of stockings, one pair of shoes, one pair of gloves and one nightgown.

Australia had sworn into the fighting services more than 830,000 men (which, on a population basis, was equivalent to a United States army of more than 14,000,000), and more than 70 per cent. of them were volunteers who had signed up for service in any theatre in the world. Almost as many were working in the munitions factories. In Australia there were only 5,000,000 men, women, and children between the ages of fourteen and sixty-five. Of this total, which included schoolchildren, mothers, and the physically handicapped, more than 3,500,000 were either in the fighting services or engaged in full-time war work—a total of roughly 70 per cent.

Of the troops under MacArthur's command five out of every six were Australians. Portions of the army were for home defence, for according to Australian law only volunteers are allowed to serve outside Australia. New legislation was ordered to make it

possible for the home defence army, if necessary, to be employed outside Australian territorial limits as far north as the Equator, as far west as Java, as far east as the Solomons. In announcing the new law, Army Minister Frank Forde said: "Nothing is more certain than that Australian forces will be fighting strongly with our Allies when the Japanese capitulation takes place, no matter where the fighting may be. The A.I.F., which comprises two-thirds of the medically fit men in the Australian Army, will be available to go anywhere in the world—even to Japan itself." Australia, almost in its fifth year of war, was planning and building to fight to the very end.

From the great new industrial machine that had been built up since the declaration of war, a vast stream of war production was moving down the assembly lines. The land that had never made an automobile was now turning out hundreds of units for the growing Australian armoured divisions. American machine tools were sent out to assist in the establishment of the vast new industry. A million-dollar foundry was established for the casting of huge steel tank hulls in a single piece. An American Army armoured fighting vehicles expert saw the first tests of the new Australian-designed, Australian-built monster. "It isn't just another tank," he said. "It's a very good tank indeed. In fact, it's a honey!"

A vast organization which extended the length and breadth of the continent was out to fulfil, in the least possible time, munitions orders amounting to seven hundred millions of dollars. The infant industry had become very much an adult. Australia was no longer content to remain dependent on war supplies from overseas.

## THE NEW PARTNERSHIP

THE SCORE-CARD TO THE END of June, 1943, was an impressive one for the new partnership. The Yanks and the Aussies were proving to the Japanese that the new team was a tough one to beat. Best results had been obtained in the air, and by the middle of the year the intelligence experts had completed their checking and counterchecking and were at last able to add up the certified totals. The South-west Pacific had done very well indeed:

#### JAPANESE AIRCRAFT LOSSES:

1,210 destroyed definitely.  
416 probably destroyed.  
522 severely damaged.

TOTAL: 2,148

#### JAPANESE SHIPPING LOSSES:

446 ships of all types definitely sunk.

##### Categories:

2 battleships totalling .	58,600 tons
6 aircraft carriers .	92,000 "
9 heavy cruisers .	75,000 "
8 light cruisers .	40,000 "
70 destroyers .	91,000 "
25 submarines .	38,000 "
1 seaplane tender .	9,000 "
25 tankers .	220,000 "
300 merchant ships .	1,600,000 "

This was the record of the Allied Air Forces alone, a formidable testimony of the worth of aviation in island warfare. Manpower losses of the Japanese exceeded 60,000 killed in action, but the figure did not take into account the sick and wounded, and the total investment of the enemy in a campaign that had gone completely awry probably was infinitely heavier.

Since these totals were compiled the combined South-South-west Pacific offensive has been launched, and enemy sea and air losses, not to mention losses of combat troops, have increased greatly. American 105-millimetre howitzers, lugged through the incredible jungles of the Mubo track, poured high explosive into shattered Salamaua, a tiny village on a narrow isthmus which felt more than 1,500 tons of shattering high explosive before it fell.

There is a hard fight still ahead. The great problem still confronting the men directing major strategies is that of enormous distances. Every ground operation is a battle, not for territory, but for bases. Japan, on the other hand, as we have seen, has reached the point where she has abandoned further offensive moves so that she can consolidate her gains and build up a great defensive structure and reserve of material. She is now playing the waiting game, hoping that the Allies will wear themselves out in Europe, and that her peace overtures will be welcomed by a war-weary people. There is little doubt that Japan would cash in

on the emotional hysteria inevitable to the capitulation of the great power of Germany, and launch a great wave of propaganda designed to convince Americans and Australians and New Zealanders and those others still fighting the war in the Pacific that a negotiated peace would be desirable.

"Why continue this war for meaningless coral islands?" she will ask. "Why should the flower of American and Australian manhood be sacrificed for some slice of territory in distant Asia?" The fighting democracies must beware of this moment, must not allow emotion and war strain to stand in the way of carrying the job through to its ultimate moment—the complete capitulation of Japan. At the moment the two continents that have least felt the physical impact of modern war are Australia and the Americas. Europe has been shattered, Africa has been a battleground through all of the old Italian colonial empire and through the greater part of the French, uncounted millions have died on Asian soil.

Australia has begun her fifth year of war. In less than three months' time the United States will enter her third year of declared war against the Axis. In neither country is there much war-weariness, in the sense that there is war-weariness in Europe and Asia and North Africa. It is true that Australians and Americans alike complain about the personal privations that war has forced upon them—food shortages, ration points, gasoline allotments, heavy taxation. But the unanimous opinion of all of these people is to go ahead, to fight on, to finish the job, to rid the world for all time of the common enemies of mankind, the disciples of brute force, bad faith, injustice, and oppression. There is no talk in America or in Australia of crying quits and of settling for half measures.

In the Australian theatre alone Allied youngsters flying pursues and bombers have shot out of the skies more than 2,000 of Japan's best aircraft; have sent to the bottom the twisted, smoking wreckage of 2,224,600 tons of Japanese naval and mercantile shipping. These are proud figures, but they represent only a fraction of the punishment that remains to be dealt out to the most treacherous foe mankind has ever known.

And when that punishment is completed there remains the great job of co-operating in the peace as closely and as earnestly as the Pacific partners co-operated for war. In terms of population, Australia's representation at the council tables of post-war reconstruction must be a very small one. In terms of struggle and sacrifice, however, both Australia and New Zealand must figure as important factors. When war finally ends there will be few



people who will be able to say with as much sincerity as the Anzacs—"We fought for this peace."

To-day Australia is on the eve of a general election. For the first time in the country's history minors have been given a franchise, for any soldier who has been on active duty abroad, irrespective of age, is entitled to vote for his national leaders. For these soldiers' votes there are no ballot boxes, no canvassing by candidates, no regular ballot papers. But the votes are coming in from Iceland, and India, Bermuda, Canada, Rhodesia, the United States; from North Africa and Sicily, from Malta and Great Britain, from the Solomons and New Guinea, from Iran and Cyprus, from ships ploughing over troubled oceans and distant seas—from 830,000 fighting men of a nation that knows that its leaders have given no promises other than the promises of increased hardships, more sacrifices, greater restrictions, heavier burdens . . . and ultimate victory. They will vote for the leader who will show them the shortest road to peace, no matter how rough that road may be.<sup>1</sup>

Behind Australia's fighting men are her millions of civilians. They are bewildered, war-harassed, tax-burdened. Many of them work in munitions factories, others are air-raid wardens and coastal spotters. They have lived through the anxious days of threatened invasion and they have seen the threat disappear, to be replaced by the hopes of new offensives. But they have been scarred by the war.

It is a man-sized job now for a civilian to try and buy a pack of cigarettes or a box of matches or a razor blade. His sport and gambling have almost disappeared; his four gallons of gasoline a month (if he is lucky) are not sufficient to enable him to go to any of the resorts he once visited; the queer contraption called a charcoal-burner which he has fitted to the back of his automobile to obtain extra mileage is dirty, dangerous, and not very efficient. He has seen the economy of his country put out of joint, he has seen the whole land denuded of manpower; he has seen his towns and cities overcrowded, lacking sufficient food, lacking sufficient personnel to carry on essential services. He has seen long lines forming at a barber shop to obtain a haircut, longer lines at every restaurant to try to obtain one of the crude, heavily-rationed austerity meals. He has seen the building industry and the real-estate business become extinct, because property sales are out for the duration and there aren't enough houses or apartments or even hotel rooms to fill the swelling demand. Even the solace of a bottle

<sup>1</sup> Curtin's Government was returned with overwhelming majorities in both Houses.

of beer is denied him, because there is scarcely enough beer for the troops, and liquor is something to tell reminiscent stories about.

His clothes are shabby now, and he knows that he hasn't enough clothing coupons to buy any more this year. Money (which never worried the Australian very much) troubles him even less now, because taxation is taking almost all he ever had to spare, and anyway there is nothing to buy with it.

But he isn't war-weary after four years of war. He is harder than when the war began, the softnesses have gone. He wants nothing more than to get back to peace, but he wants to finish the job first. He votes for the leader who will show him the quickest road to peace, no matter how hard that road may be. He does not expect, nor does he want, a return to comfort and luxury. The politicians aren't using that as a bait for votes. The slogan for Australia must still be "Total War."

It isn't all sombre thinking for the people at home, though. There are other things to think about. They think, and talk, a lot about the new partnership of America and Australia. They are proud of the combat team that has licked the Japs and saved their country. They are proud of the record of their fighting men, their own sons and brothers and cousins. They are proud of the great industrial effort of a pastoral country that became one of the great arsenals of the Pacific. They are proud of the women who stepped in when the men marched away to war—women who worked as postmen, tram drivers and conductors, factory hands, nurses and gunners in coastal fortresses, and plane-spotters at anti-aircraft positions.

Australia's man on the street is proud of the Americans, and grateful for what they have done. He sees the great unknown wastes of the continent being thrown open. He sees great arterial roads spanning the continent from east to west, from north to south. He sees new towns springing up in the rolling plains of the outback, a maze of gigantic airfields which have forever shattered the isolation and the distances of the arid heart of Australia. He sees mighty industries established. He sees in the distance a new Australia—an Australia independent and powerful, with a balanced economy. He sees a land of great sheep farms and great textile factories, of rolling wheat plains and busy flour mills. He sees a land of spreading highways and mammoth factories for the manufacture of automobiles and farm tractors—a land whose frontiers have been pushed back farther by two years of war than could have been done in twenty-two years of peacetime development. He sees new opportunities for youth.

And he sees something of the youth that will help carve new futures from this rough, primitive country. They are strong and sunburned and resolute, for they have fought to defend their land. They have seen comrades die in thousands, and they have fought because they believed that they were fighting for a better Australia. And he knows the new stock, too. They are also young and tough and sunburned and resolute, and they have fought shoulder to shoulder with his own Australians. They fought first for America, but now they are fighting as much for the great sun-drenched land they have grown to love. Hundreds, perhaps thousands, will come back to Australia to find their own futures.

And they, with 830,000 fighting men, and with Australia's millions of civilians, look confidently into that future, towards a new, revitalized Australia.

The Americans are no longer parade-ground soldiers. They are fighters. They sweat and curse and live in stinking squalor. They have a common address—"Somewhere in the South-west Pacific." And they are proud of that address and all that it implies. It was American Staff-Sergeant Tom Ashlock who wrote from Australia a memorable poem that was published in *Yank*, the Army's weekly magazine. It gives a clue to the new American. He calls it "The Legion of the Uncouth":

*From the Stevens in Chicago town,  
To our sun-blistered, bug-infested post,  
Is a far, unholy cry—and the difference  
Much the same as that which lies between  
My lady's boudoir and a stable stall:  
We're a motley, rugged, crumbly lot,  
No subjects for a Sunday supplement:  
But somehow I don't think a man of us,  
Deep down within his heart, would trade his place  
With fortune's darlings in the Stevens lounge.  
We're in the thing, you see—not quite as much  
But something like—our buddies at Bataan,  
Corregidor, the Solomons, and Wake;  
And because we walk in shabbiness, unkempt,  
Ungroomed, and live with pests and breathe red dust  
And thirst and bake in searing heat, and drown  
In tropic rains—like them—we're fiercely proud.  
Let others have the dress parade, the show,  
The full-page spread in magazines. We like  
Our role—the real, the earnest, cussin', sweatin',  
Dirty, ugly role of men at war!*

These are the new Americans, the men whom people thought might be soft and decadent a year ago. Not now. They have joined the partnership of the South-west Pacific. They are the men who are looking to the future of America, and the future of Australia. And those who decide to stay on in the land of the wattle and the waratah will be welcomed as they were welcomed when they first set foot on Australian soil. Australia will be glad—and proud—to have them stay.

## AND THE FUTURE . . .

THE PEACE IS STILL IN THE FUTURE, but the problems of the peace—and they will be great problems—are being tackled to-day. Australia's problem of post-war reconstruction is, in effect, America's problem in miniature. It is the problem of gradually whittling a wartime economy down to a peacetime economy, of dodging the great boggy of inflation, of settling back into normal life the millions of men and women now in combat or in war production, of starting again the great international machine of world trade and transportation and travel, of making sure that the fighters of to-day are not the hawkers of vacuum-cleaners and peddlers of shoe-laces of to-morrow.

Australian Treasurer Joseph Chifley, the man charged with his country's post-war plans, has a simple basis for his schemes: "There were many good things in pre-war Australia. On these will we build. Those things which were bad we will change. We will plan boldly, but we have no starry-eyed dreams of a new world."

The bad things in Australia's pre-war world were, on a smaller scale, the same things we find in America: economic insecurity, uncertainty of employment, bad housing for the poor, insufficient health and social services, a standard of living too low by the new standards. First consideration when the war ends, in all countries, must be the reabsorption of the fighting men. In the last war Australia had 330,000 soldiers who fought overseas. Of these, only 257,000 had to be demobilized into peacetime employment, in addition to 3,000 munitions workers.

To-day the problem is greater. Demobilization now will affect roughly a million and a half soldiers and munitions workers. The cessation of arms production will throw on the labour market more men and women than the entire pre-war factory payroll!

Work has already begun on some of the great projects that will take care of this problem. One is a ten-year plan in which 60,000 men a year will be employed in the building of 250,000 houses, roughly based on the planning of Australia's model capital city, Canberra, which was designed by Chicago architect Walter Burley Griffin. Tremendous irrigation schemes will be put into operation to make fertile some of the great areas which are at present unproductive. Sixty per cent. of Australia has insufficient rainfall for any purpose but sparse grazing. Transportation will absorb tens of thousands of men in large-scale undertakings. One will be developmental work on the great chain of arterial highways built over thousands of miles of country as military roads. Another will be the unification of the gauges of the entire 28,000 miles of the Australian railroad system. Many of the great factories established for war production will be switched over to civilian production, and the decentralization of factories will bring about the urgently-needed decentralization of population.

Over and above all these plans is the great plan to populate the new Australia that will be born out of the trials of this war. It is certain that there will be some form of subsidized or "assisted" migration. This war has proved undeniably that Australia must have more people, several millions more. And Australia is fortunate in that her developmental potential is so enormous that more people can be taken—in fact, will be necessary—to develop her new industries and to open up great areas, the frontiers of which have been pushed back by war. Many of these people will come from the United States of America. The two Pacific nations are no longer far apart even in terms of distance. I flew from Brisbane to San Francisco in thirty-six hours. Thousands of men in the last year have spanned the Pacific between America and Australia in less time than it once took to go from New York to Florida. The men who talk now of planes crossing the Atlantic in twelve hours with tourists and freight, "every hour on the hour," and of spanning the Pacific in twenty-four hours, are not foolish prophets. These things will come—and they will come very soon after the final laying down of arms.

Australia, too, is looking to America for much of the driving power that will mould a great new nation out of a sparsely-peopled continent—the capital investment, the technical advice, the special equipment, the skilled labour. And Americans are also looking to Australia for new opportunities.

In the post-war world Australia must be prepared to be less insular, less tied by tradition to questions of Empire preference. In this war the United Nations have supplanted the British

Empire. We must not, in the years to come, raise great tariff walls against American imports to give preference to those of Canada or Britain or South Africa. We must not impose ridiculous transportation laws that deny to the ships and planes of the United States the concessions available to the ships and planes of the Empire. We have all been in this fight together, and we are all in the peace together and it is time that stupid national and racial prejudices and impositions were dispensed with in the common interests of all.

The last war was a war to save democracy. Out of its horror and blood and sacrifice came a short period of false prosperity, and decades of poverty and doubt and mistrust and barbarism and a whole world again plunging headlong into the abyss of war. Out of this war *must* come a new order—not the New Order of Nazism, nor the Co-prosperity Sphere of Japan, nor the same chaotic struggle of exploitation by capitalist enterprise and vested interests that has scarred the fabric of democracy for so many years past. Out of this struggle *must* come the world of the Atlantic Charter, a world “which will afford to all nations the means of dwelling in safety within their own boundaries, and which will afford assurance that *all the men in all the lands* may live out their lives in freedom from fear and from want.”

Australia and Britain and the United States and New Zealand are signatories to the Atlantic Charter. They must be prepared to sacrifice their previous conceptions of international relationships. Britain must end the period of exploitation of subject peoples in Asia. Australia must throw away its tariffs and its dependence on others. America must renounce its isolationism and be prepared to help bring its better way of life into countries less fortunate in all the material things of life. America has shrunk from this in the past because it feared charges of “imperialism,” but America has a duty to civilization which cannot be reconciled with a policy of national introspection.

Many people think that the Atlantic Charter is so named because it concerns only the Atlantic region or the Powers having interests in that region. To the contrary, its signatories represent all the free peoples of the world. It is a charter for Asia and the Pacific as much as for Europe and the Atlantic.

The fight against Japan has not been a fight to retain or regain territory. It has been a fight to retain our civilization. At the moment our greatest weight of arms is turned against Germany. That does not mean that Germany offers the more dangerous threat to the European, or the American, or the British, or the Australian way of life. On the contrary, the greatest threat in that

respect comes from Japan, which represents feudal tyranny driving across the Pacific in the most modern vehicles of war.

For years past, Japan has propagated the idea of a co-prosperity sphere in Asia. But ever since 1931, and increasingly so since she has occupied and begun to exploit British, Dutch, and American areas in Malaya, the Philippines, and the Dutch East Indies, it has become plain that the so-called prosperity sphere means only this—that Japan is to get the prosperity while the subject peoples are to get lower standards of living and the status of serfs or slaves. We cannot reorganize the post-war world on the Japanese system, because we are fighting to-day on a hundred battlefronts to end that system. Nor can we bring any post-war order to the Pacific that is to be for the sole benefit of one Power or group of Powers. Our dominant purpose must be to benefit *all* peoples everywhere. If freedom from want means anything, it means that the age of unfair exploitation is over.

The problems of the Pacific are many and infinitely complex. The mere listing of the countries concerned suggests a range of problems—political, economic, and social—that is almost boundless, and their solution will tax our wisdom, our understanding, our tolerance, and above all, our sincerity.

It has taken a bloody war to make Australia "Pacific-conscious." What then is needed to make other nations conscious of the enormous problems of this troubled area? The civilization of Australia was based upon a long European tradition. Our geographical position developed certain local characteristics that made us different from our kinsmen in Great Britain and our allies in the United States. But it took war and the threat of invasion and daily peril to make the Australian people finally conscious of the fact that their responsibilities and their rights were primarily those of a key Pacific nation. That is why Australia, now, is so vitally interested in the future of the Pacific.

Peace and stability can be achieved only by building a way of life in the Pacific in which the varied nations and people can live together in peace and prosperity. And we can do that only if we prepare plans which take into account the legitimate aspirations of the peoples, and if we find a basis for economic development which will provide constantly improving economic standards for all the peoples of the Pacific. That is, after all, the fundamental of the Atlantic Charter.

In the future our doctrine of trusteeship must be for the benefit of *all*, regardless of race or creed or colour. Something of that sort of trusteeship was carried out by the Australians in New Guinea under the mandate system of the League of Nations. It contrasted

with Japan's record as a mandatory power, where a solemn trust was treacherously betrayed. But the New Guinea natives were a vital factor in driving the Japanese out of New Guinea. Their loyalty and heroism in the face of heartbreaking difficulties were sufficient evidence that Australian trusteeship could triumph over Japanese barbarism.

There is no need to go beyond the terms of the Atlantic Charter, which the United Nations have agreed to. The only need is to set the machinery to work. The United Nations have agreed that their countries "seek no aggrandizement, territorial or otherwise; that they desire to see no territorial changes that do not agree with the freely expressed wish of the peoples concerned; that they respect the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live."

The problem is a great one—economically, politically, socially. But the winning of the war was a great problem, too, less than two years ago. Six months ago we could have been defeated only if we committed some major blunder. To-day we can't be defeated even if we do make a major blunder; we can merely be delayed. If we can win the war, we can win the peace, but it will involve much work, much thought, much more sincerity than most of us have displayed in the past.

The period that linked the First World War with the Second World War was an ugly era. It made one thing finally clear—that that lust for colonial area was a constant threat to the security of the world. That sort of thing will no longer be tolerated by the public opinion of enlightened peoples.

And so, in the Pacific, Australians and Americans fight on together. They fight to win a war so that a peace can be won for their peoples, and for all peoples. And at the opposite ends of the greatest ocean in the world are other fighters. The red dust rises from the rolling Mallee plains as the Australian farmer trudges behind his plough. The warm, moist earth of Iowa is scarred by the shining steel discs of another plough. The people at home, in America and in Australia, diligently read their morning newspapers, talk with their friends about their victory gardens and their little problems, anxiously ask each other when the war will end. Countless thousands of men and women, in Melbourne and San Francisco, in Pittsburgh and Newcastle, bend over whirling drills, dust the spirals of steel from the slow-turning lathe chucks. The children run to school, satchels strapped to backs, cheeks rosy, limbs firm, eyes bright. The American children look exactly like the Australian youngsters. In a Connecticut schoolroom a history professor quietly recites the Declaration of Independence



to a group of boys—boys with down on their cheeks and with the sudden new knowledge that within a year or two, should the war last that long, they will be fighting also to safeguard those words:

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness."

And in a quiet Australian schoolroom, with the warm spring sun beating in through the windows, another group of boys still recites the poem that Australian boys and girls have been taught for many years:

*But whatever her quarrel, whoever her foes,  
Let them come, let them come when they will;  
Though the struggle be grim, 'tis Australia that knows  
That her children will fight while the waratah grows  
And the wattle blooms out on the hill.*

